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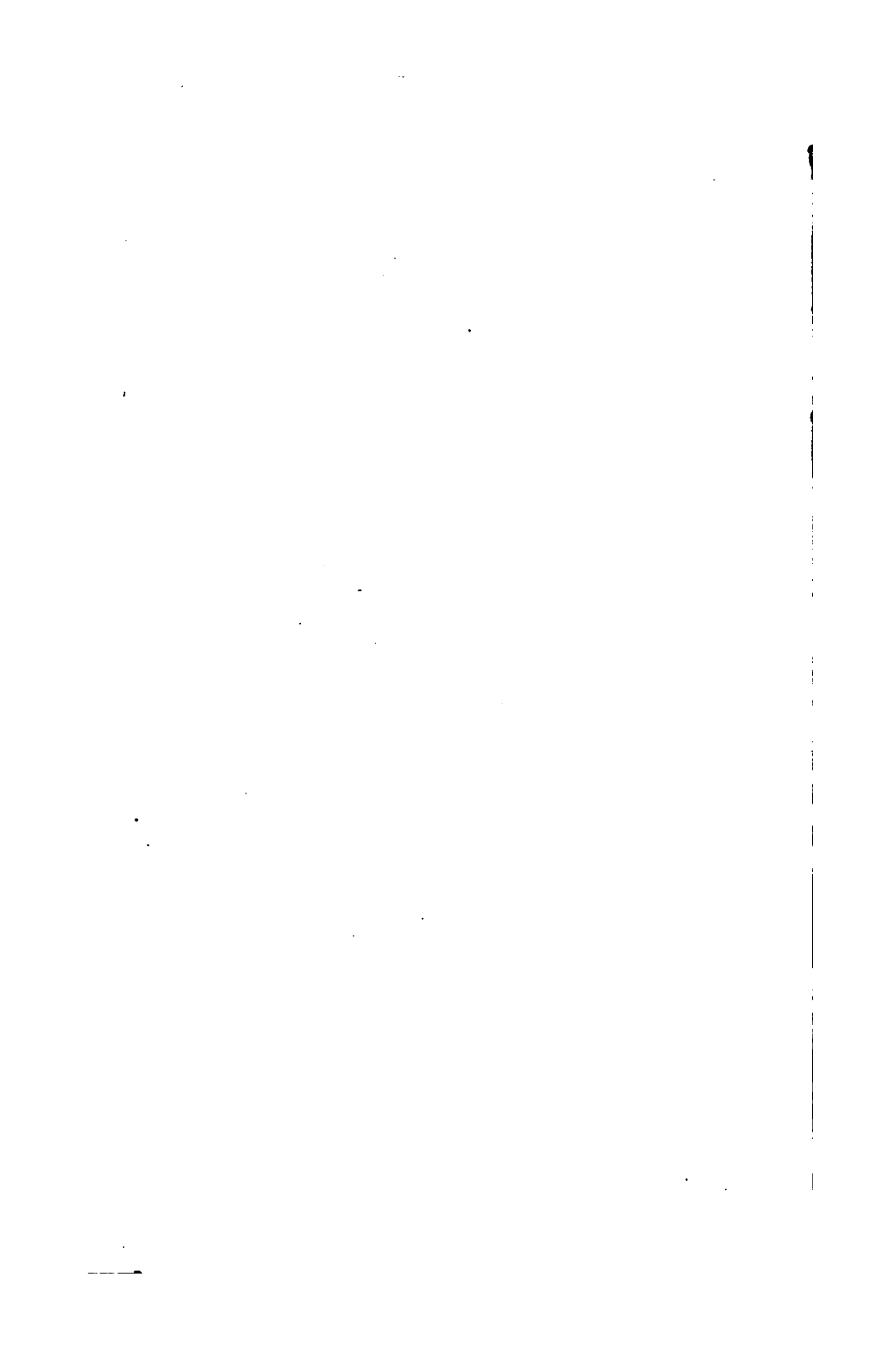


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THE HOUSE OF RABY.



THE HOUSE OF RABY;

OR,

OUR LADY OF DARKNESS.

"Hush! whisper whilst we talk of her! * * * She is the defier of God. She also is the mother of lunacies and the suggestress of suicides. * * * She carries no key, for though coming rarely among men she storms all doors at which she is permitted to enter at all. And her name is *Mater Tenebrarum*,—Our Lady of Darkness."

DE QUINCEY'S "*Suspiria de Profundis*."

"Of love that never found his earthly close,
What sequel?"

TENNYSON'S "*Love and Duty*."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

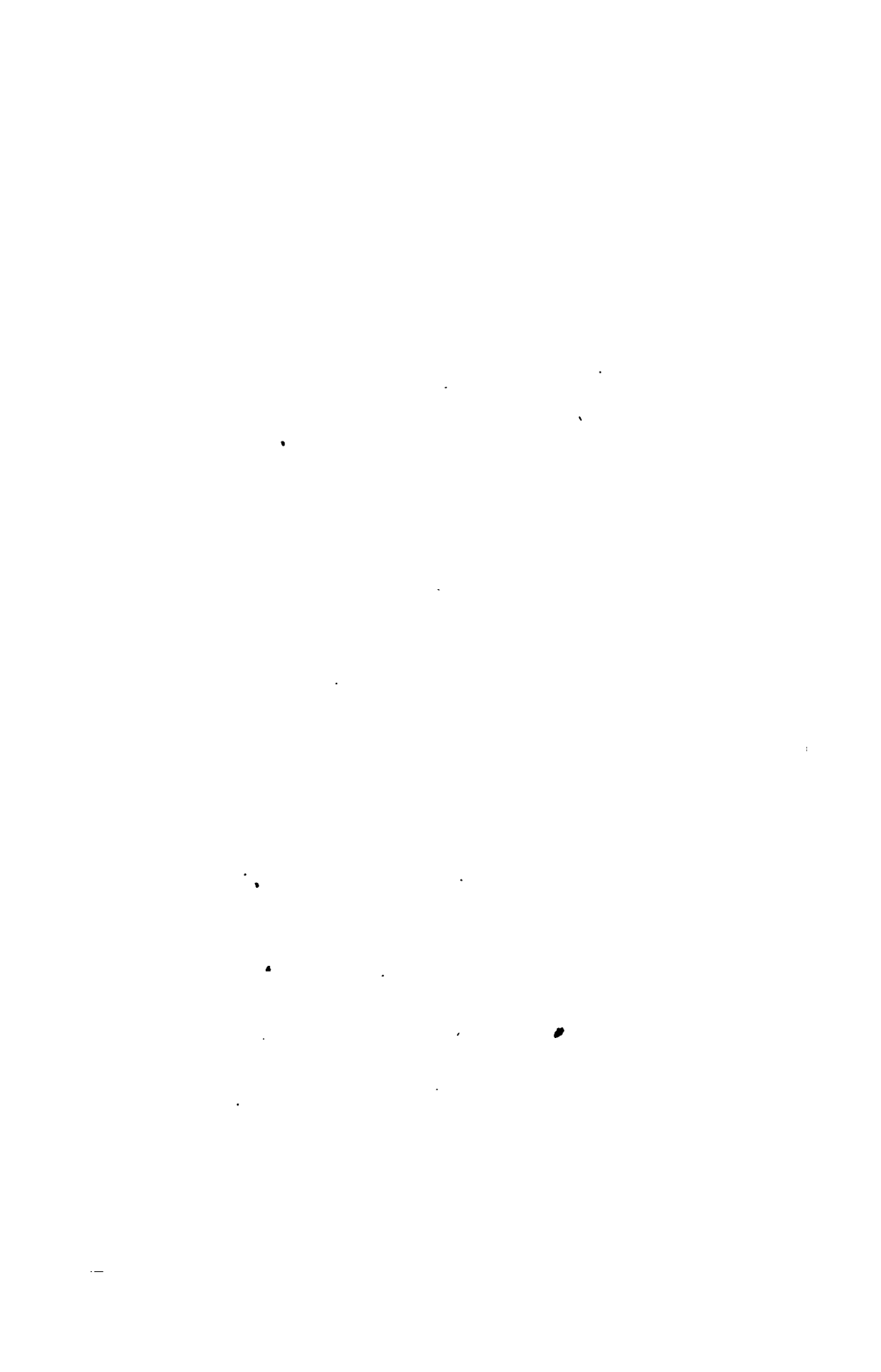


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THE HOUSE OF RABY;
OR,
OUR LADY OF DARKNESS.

CHAPTER XI.

LORD CARLETON.

"A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity."
Proverbs of Solomon.

A SHORT time after the date of the last letter to his sister, my grandfather writes to her as follows :

"Sophia and I dined at the castle to-day. The change in her ladyship is very evident. She is silent and sad,—she, who is naturally talkative and merry. But what can I say of the change in Carleton? When we were alone I turned the conversation on his wife.

For the first time, for I know not how long, he spoke to me in the old way.

“ ‘ Henry !’ he exclaimed, ‘ what can I do ? I stay in the room with her and the children till my brain burns, and I am obliged to leave them lest I should commit some act of madness. I *feel* the taint in my blood then ! She is changed, you say. Do I not know it ? Do I not know the cause ? Oh ! what would I give, *now*, never to have known the happiness of calling that woman my wife ! Yet I love her ; ay,—Henry, *love* her,—not as I once loved your sister—but better, perhaps ; for, “ she doth love for love allow ;—the other did not so.” (Think not because I can quote poetry that I am mad, or that I am only superficially miserable.) Yes ! Loving Caroline as I do, now ; knowing how generous and noble she is, and that she once loved me as I never deserved to be loved by any woman, I would give all I possess on earth never to have married her. I cannot bear to face the evil that is slowly coming on. She is ceasing to love, beginning to despise me, to look into my eyes for the cause of her child’s malady. *If* she should find it there ?

“ He paused ; and I was about to reply,

‘Why not tell her the whole truth at once?’ when I remembered Dr. Ward’s warning, and knowing that the discussion of such a question would necessarily agitate him much, I determined to postpone it; and said, ‘Dr. Ward was of opinion that Lady Carleton had no actual *knowledge* that there was insanity in the Raby family, and that by judicious management she need not be made aware of it for several years to come, if at all.’

“He laughed bitterly. ‘Does the doctor know so little of women? They are all quick enough in discovering what concerns those they love, be it good or bad. She loves her child too well not to know that his disease is not common to all children. Depend upon it, she guesses, if she has not actually discovered, the truth. It is that which preys upon her health. She is too proud to utter a reproach; but her silent, uncomplaining demeanour is more than I can bear.’

“I approached him by an irresistible impulse, and said, as I should have said twenty years ago: ‘My dear friend! do at once the thing that is right. Do not sleep this night till you have told all to your wife.’ He re-

mained silent. 'Poor, proud, suffering heart!' I thought. 'How weak thou art.' But shall I forsake my early friend because he has lost peace of mind, and acted weakly (let me say it out), wickedly, as *I* think? Because he has disappointed all my fond hopes of seeing in him a glorious model of voluntary obedience to a recognised higher law than the law of this world? Because I cannot be *proud of him*; cannot find in him and his conduct wherewith to make me amends for the littleness of common men; cannot look up to him as a superior being, as I once firmly believed I should always be able to do while we inhabited this planet together? The man I singled out from the race, as one more tried, and more capable of bearing trial than others, he has been found wanting—he whom I set up on a pedestal above the rest of my fellow-men, has stepped down and mingled with the crowd. Shall I cease to love and care for him on this account? Again, shall I, who have not experienced and, therefore, cannot measure the force of the temptation, shall I rise up in judgment against the sin? I have been to blame in this matter, Margaret!—much and grievously to blame! Poor

Carleton ! I have not done my duty by him. I see it all now ! Since his marriage I have not sought, nay, rather have I shrunk from any renewal of our old familiar heart-intercourse. He has felt this, and has taken refuge in the stronghold of his pride. We two, who were nearer and dearer than ordinary brothers, have not known each other's heart for ten years ; until to-day !—This is assuredly my fault more than his. He knew my opinion on the question of marriage, for *him*. When I looked into his face I read something like *this* there. 'It is true. I admit it ! I have done what my conscience does not approve entirely !—But no harm *may* come to any one. I will suffer no one, not even *you*, to accuse me of it. I do not ask for your approval ; I abide by the consequences of my own acts !'

“ When his two beautiful boys were both in health, I used to observe the proud, elate look in his face as he watched them. Even *I* began to hope that there was no danger of the dire disease for them ; and that their father himself, successful and happy, might never be its victim again.

“ Once, I remember, he said to me, as he

pointed to his children, ‘Hastings, what say you, now? Do you think *I* ought to have been *the last* of my race?’ Gratified pride and affection shone in every feature. Three weeks after that, little Arundel had his first fit!

“Since then, Carleton has been slowly changing. Year after year he has been growing sadder, but not wiser; no, certainly not wiser. He is careless about things of importance, runs after novelties, and neglects the duties which lie round about him. His bodily health has declined, and with it, his mental vigour. He is evidently very unhappy.—It is natural that I should dread an attack of the kind to which I once saw him a victim.—The loving attentions of his wife seem, hitherto, to have aggravated the evil.—To be the sole cause of grief to her, is almost intolerable to him! He fears that her love will be changed into something like contempt, when she learns that *he was aware* that this fate might be hers, in marrying him; and yet he never warned her. Would not her bitterest reproaches be just? He feels that they would; that he could have no excuse; not even that poor one of a blind, headlong passion for herself. *That*, he says, he never pretended; it

was a *mariage de convenance*; in which Lady Morton was the principal agent. He says Caroline liked him and he liked her; but, that they neither of them talked nor thought much of *loving*. Love has come since, strange to say!—and on both sides. Love for the wife whom he has helped to deceive; pity, the most intense pity, for her as a mother;—his own grief as a father;—the fear of some unknown and terrible form of the disease manifesting itself in this gifted boy.—These feelings, with an ever present sense of having acted unworthily—of having failed in securing his object—battle incessantly in the brain and heart of my poor friend. I have long suspected this; yet, I could not break through the wall of reserve which has grown up between us, until this day! Thank God! we have met once more, heart to heart. I have hitherto shunned my duties towards him—have been but a lukewarm friend and a neglectful pastor. I have never spoken to him of the only efficient source of help—for all who *know* that they have sinned. By the blessing of Providence, it shall not be so hereafter.

“I cannot set down all that passed between us; but this unburdening of the heart has

done him good, I am sure—perhaps, stayed the progress of the disease, which, he fears, is creeping on himself. I advised, entreated him to seek an explanation with his wife—to trust to her love and generosity. He shrunk from such counsel. Could not even see that it was the most politic, as well as the right course. Is it not true that if we weaken our moral discipline, we, at the same time, endanger the brightness of our intellectual faculties? Carleton is now in the prime of his age; but this one great misdeed has weighed down his whole being, and prevented its natural growth. He is not what he might have been, and he knows it; though he astonished me to-day by saying that ‘perhaps, upon the whole, he had got as much good out of life as if he had adhered to the semi-Quixotic system of self-denial he had once laid down for himself.’ Surely there is something wrong in his brain when he can take up the specious unreason of that philosophy which calls virtue *Quixotism* !”

CHAPTER XII.

A HUSBAND'S CONFESSION—THE HEIR IN PERIL—THE TAINT IN
THE BLOOD.

"She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life."

Proverbs.

THE next letter bears the date of the following day.

"A note from Lady Carleton came to me early this morning, begging that I would come to the castle as soon as possible, and see his lordship, who was not well, and had expressed a desire to speak with me. I delayed not a moment; but rode up, through the park, as fast as possible, fearing the worst. Strange as it seemed to myself at the time, the beauty of the place pressed itself on my mind's eye more than usual, as I cantered over the turf. Full of sad forebodings as I

was, the familiar loveliness of that external Nature seemed to demand attention. It was as if the woods, the grassy glades, the graceful hills, and the river-like lake were all new to me. A thousand charms, never perceived before, crowded in on the sense;—and several times I stopped to look at some view, which, seen I know not how often before, had never been seen *so*! Surely there is no more beautiful spot in England than Carleton! I thought.—But what a time to think it!—If any one were to relate this to me of himself, I should probably condemn him as a man of shallow and frivolous nature.—Humanity is a strange conundrum. A small theory, however well compacted, will never furnish the solution to it.

“On reaching the castle, I asked to see her ladyship. She was alone in her private room. Alone, and, for a wonder, unemployed. I think she had been weeping. There was a marked cordiality in her greeting; though there was no gladness in it. She thanked me for coming immediately—said that Lord Carleton ‘had been ill’—‘over-excited’—‘feverish’—the previous night, and that she had taken advantage of his wish to see me to

request that I would take notice of the state of his health, and, if I thought it advisable, she would write to Dr. Ward on the subject. 'My dear Mr. Hastings,' she concluded, 'you will excuse this, I am sure, if you think it is a foolish, groundless anxiety on my part; because I know so little about men's illnesses! There may be really nothing the matter with Frederick more than the natural effect of his anxiety about Arundel. You will tell me what I ought to do.'

"There was confidence in me, and a certain dignified reserve upon the subject of her suspicion, in the look which she gave me then, which I could not but admire. I said, at once, that 'it was fortunate that she felt trust in me; that I understood Carleton's constitution better than he did, and that I could soon ascertain whether Dr. Ward's interference was necessary,—if I could prevail upon him to tell me exactly what ailed him. But that would be difficult;—as he was one of those men who would never admit that he had an ailment until he was prostrated by it.'—After hearing a favourable account of both the children, I left her, and went to the library.

"Carleton was there. At first I did not

see him; for he was standing in the embrasure of a window, looking out over the park;—being, it seems, struck by the extraordinary beauty and freshness of the morning, as I had been. I approached him, and we shook hands in silence. His mournful eyes flashed upon me suspiciously, as he said :

“ ‘ You were *sent for* ? ’ ”

“ ‘ Yes. Lady Carleton wrote a line to say that you had been unwell last night, and had expressed a wish to see me. Are you better this morning ? ’ ”

“ ‘ Did she tell you anything of what passed last night ? ’ he inquired suddenly, without replying to my question.

“ ‘ No ! she is anxious about your health. You must take care of yourself, or let her and others take care of you.—You are not well. ’ ”

“ He glanced at me, but said nothing. I don’t think he understood my words ; his mind was pre-occupied. He passed his arm through mine, and led me close to the window. ‘ Is not that a fine prospect ? ’ he asked.

“ ‘ Yes. I have stopped a dozen times on the road this morning to ask myself the same question ! ’ ”

“He smiled. ‘It is a glorious place!—I cannot bear to go from it!’

“‘But you are not going away yet! I’m sure London can do without you better than Carleton!’

“He said nothing; but gazed intently into the distance. Presently he turned to me and said—‘How is Margaret?’

“I was surprised, as we never speak of you. ‘She was well when we last heard from her,’ I replied, in an indifferent tone; not wishing to irritate his mind.

“‘*Well!* Yes—those who *do* well always *are* well!—But, Hastings,—those who do better than well,—those who are capable of something higher and nobler than mere conformity with a rule because they see that it is prudent—such people are not always *well!* They suffer through their affections; they do not become mere machines for the working out of a principle; but are content to leave the principle on its own low ground of expediency, and spreading the wings of a noble impulse, ascend to a region whither those others can never follow them! It is a loftier region; one more exposed to the pelting of the pitiless storms of life, certainly;—but it is

one in which a generous soul breathes more freely than in the narrow, well-sheltered garden of expediency.'

" 'I do not quite understand to what this applies!' I said, smiling, and glad to go off into generalities. 'But if you mean to say that mediocrity is not excellence—that to be "content to live in decencies for ever" is not as honourable as striving after the crown of virtue, I am obliged to agree with you;—though with regret,—for few things are more insipid to my taste than a platitude.—If, on the contrary, you wish me to swallow a paradox, I'm afraid I can't oblige you. I do *not* think it less easy or less virtuous to live according to principle than it is to indulge our impulses. Good and charming as our impulses often are, I do not conceive it is highly meritorious to give them way.'

" 'Have I been talking nonsense?' he asked.

" 'Either that, or something worse!'—and I smiled.

" 'Common-place?'—and he tried to smile too.—'I will tell you what I was thinking of!—Caroline and I had some conversation last night.' Here he turned away from me, and looked over the park, with a wandering,

uncertain gaze. I did not like the expression of his face at all;—it strengthened my fears. I wished to turn the conversation; yet it was not possible to do so then, without exciting him more, perhaps, than the expression of his feelings would do. I drew close to him and listened. All the time he was speaking his eyes roamed incessantly over the varied expanse of sky, and wood,—lake, and green sward; fixing themselves intently, for a moment or so, on any moving object—deer, or bird, or passing horseman.

“ ‘ Last night I went to speak to Caroline. Your advice dwelt in my mind. I acted on it—after long deliberation.—It was late. Every one had retired to rest. I had been in my room some time; but had not thought of lying down. Of late I cannot sleep, and hate to lie down; finding more repose in walking to and fro in my room. Suddenly I felt the courage to go and speak to Caroline. If I did not speak *then*, I could never speak at all. I had subdued my pride for the moment. I snatched up the lamp, and went into the cabinet which connects our chambers. There was no sound within hers. I hesitated—“ She is asleep, perhaps. After these long weary

weeks of fatigue it would be selfish to disturb her; especially for such a purpose. I will speak to-morrow!" Will you believe it, Hastings? I, whose fault is not that of deliberating too long—whose motto of action, as you once said, is "*gedacht, gethan!*"—I stood for five minutes, debating with myself whether I should or should not enter my wife's room. At last, from mere shame and anger at my absurd indecision, I knocked suddenly and sharply on the door.

"To my surprise her voice was heard immediately—"Come in;"—she, who used to sleep so soundly that no knocking awakened her!

"She was in bed, and reading, with a lamp beside her. I caught sight of the book as she put it beneath the pillow; it was a small Bible I gave her long ago. I set down my own lamp and removed hers, that I might seat myself in the fauteuil beside her; observing, in my usual tone, that "it made me uneasy to find that she still persisted in the bad habit of reading in bed." She did not remonstrate, as she used to do, in a pretty, lively way; urging a dozen reasons in favour of the habit, each worse than the last, but all

impossible for a man to combat while she made him laugh. No! That is all gone now! Poor Caroline!

“ ‘She said nothing; and as I put aside the curtain to speak to her, the light fell on her face. She had been weeping;—there was no use in trying to hide it; so she smiled faintly, as her head sunk weariedly on the pillow, and stretching out a hand to me, she said:

“ ‘ ‘Don’t think anything of my tears, Frederick. I am weak and foolish, that is all! You are right: I ought to have been asleep. But how is it *you* are not in bed, and you were so ill to-day? I was told you were gone to bed long since.”

“ ‘There was none of the usual sweetness in her manner. She said all this because she wished to hide some strong feeling. *Was it dislike of myself?* The thought chilled me, and I let fall her hand. She observed the action, and looked at me for a moment; then raising herself on her elbow, so as to see me better, she said:

“ ‘ ‘What is it, Frederick? You have come here to tell me something!—I am your wife; remember, I can and ought to bear anything you have to communicate. Try me!”

“ ‘ ‘Oh, Hastings! That word *ought*! How

it pierced me! Yes! It was clear she had been thinking of her *duties* as a wife—she had determined that she would be true to her own conceptions of right. It was pride—the pride of social position; perhaps, too, the religious feeling which helps women so much in the performance of a difficult moral duty—it was these which made her calm and ready to listen to anything I might have to reveal or to command. It was not *love*—there was no love in the tone of her voice. She was kind, but cold.

“‘Oh! how I felt the change? It pained, but it hardened me. I was the better able to fulfil my task. Leaning back in the chair, then, and closing my eyes—for I could not bear to look on that pale, anxious face, which bent forward to catch my words—I began in a steady voice, and told her all.’

“‘All?’ I inquired, somewhat astonished.

“‘Yes,’ he replied. ‘I make no half confidences!—She knows all, now. The family disease; my father’s life; my own attack of *insanity* in youth (I like to give things their proper names); my passionate love for your sister, and her wise rejection of me.—You will not quarrel about *that* term! The event has proved how judicious was her decision.’—

And there was a mixture of scornful satire, anger, and sad regret, in his sneer, which, at another time, I should have resented, on your account ; but I could not do so then, excited and overwrought as he was. He went on :

“ ‘ I told all ; I hid nothing. Told her how, for some years, I acted as you and yours thought right, and as my own conscience dictated ;—but that the approval of my conscience, and of those I loved best, did not fill the void in my heart. That I could not bear to live alone ; that the thought of the sweet forbidden love of wife and children haunted me by day and by night—that they seemed the more beautiful because they were forbidden !—Then, first, came the doubt—*were* they really forbidden ? Might I not have been acting all this time upon a false notion ? Did I meet many men, who, in steady balance of mind, were my superiors ? It would have been affectation of modesty to say I did. That fit of dementia in boyhood was never likely to return ; I felt myself to be in sound mind ; was it likely that I should transmit a fearful disease to my children, and embitter the days of the woman I made my wife ? It had always been a terrible load on my personal

pride to believe it !—Then, I found the belief growing weak within me. The families around did not think of it—that was clear ; for I could not misunderstand their willingness to secure my alliance for their daughters. I visited more ; and my thoughts on the subject became more and more doubtful. Still, the love for Margaret was alive within me !—is still alive, at times, even now !—(I told Caroline *this*, too, Hastings.) I was anxious to get free from it. While I remained here, at Carleton, my daily intercourse with you kept it up. I resolved to go away, and resume my bachelor life in London. There, everything tended to increase my belief that I had mistaken my own case.—The only part of my story that I did not dwell on fully, in relating it to Caroline, was, that with which her mother was connected. Sir Joseph and Lady Morton were very desirous that I should marry Caroline ; and, finding out *what* had been my motive in remaining single so long, they set to work to explain away my difficulties. As my father's sister, Lady Morton had a right to disabuse my mind of such error, if she believed it to be error. She spoke to me about our family disorders, gene-

rally ; obtained the opinion of various physicians ; found so much to say in favour of what I could not but wish to be true, for the sake of the noble house of Raby—that I was brought to believe it was right for me to marry. My family pride and ambition, as well as my strong yearning for domestic love, were but too well gratified by this decision. —For I decided ; and very soon after the decision, Caroline became my wife. That marriage, I can see now, was entirely made by Lady Morton ; though I seemed to be a free agent, and to choose my cousin from amid a hundred high-born damsels—all ready to become Countess of Carleton, as I was given to understand. Most men think they marry of their own free will—it is a great fallacy !

“ ‘ I told Caroline the truth when I said that out of all the women offered to my choice, she was the one I admired the most. I appreciated her thorough honesty and her undoubted mental superiority ;—in spite of the unduly cherished vanity which, at that time of her life, threatened to ruin her. I knew she had a heart, too. Her mother insinuated that it was more than half mine. *That*, together with her beauty, liveliness, and

animal spirits, charmed me. The careful and melancholy are always charmed by high spirits and careless gaiety. I told Caroline the truth when I said that every day, for the first three years after our marriage, I rejoiced in it;—that when I saw she began to *love* me really, I was a happy man—happy, as I never had been; and that my happiness increased with my love for her, which soon became strong.—I told Caroline the truth when I said that during the first year after the birth of my sons, I would not have changed places with any one on earth.—I told her the truth when I said that the love of my youth had “paled its ineffectual fire” before the present love for herself.—I told the truth when I said that mortified pride and ambition were not so powerful in my heart when I saw that the curse had fallen upon Arundel, as were pity and the agony of self-reproach, for the pain it would cost her.—I told her these, and many other truths, Hastings; but there was one truth she ought to know—which she, perhaps, suspects—and which I was cowardly enough to shrink from telling her. I did not tell—(and here he turned his face full upon me)—I did not tell her that I feel within my brain

—have long felt it coming—a return of the disorder which you remember attacked me once!—That is *my* form of the family curse.'

" 'You are over-excited just now,' said I; — 'a sudden alarm, such as that which caused your attack years ago, might, in your present state, bring on another; but there is no reason to anticipate anything of the kind. Tell me, are you not easier than you were? Did not Lady Carleton receive your communications as I expected she would?'

"The questions seemed to please, and yet to make him sadder than before. He replied thus:

" 'How little we men know of women, till we put their deepest feelings to the proof! I told my story with a presentiment that she, having before suspected part of it, had changed the love she once had for me into something like contempt and personal dislike. I had got this idea during the late perils of the child; whose existence was scarcely more precious to her than his wonderful mental endowments.

" 'I did not look at her during all that painful confession. At length I ceased, with words somewhat like these:—' And now,

Caroline, you know what I have done, and what a curse I have brought upon you !—I do not talk to you any more as a husband. I claim no love, no duty from you ! You were deceived in me ; you loved a noble and true man, not one who could allow himself to be guilty of a cheat, and make you and those dearest to you its victims !” ’

“ He paused a moment and glanced towards me ; then looked away again, into the distance, as if something attracted his attention there.

“ Then he resumed speaking, thus : ‘ Hastings, I hardly know how to tell you what followed ; it is so sacred and dear to my heart !—Still, you ought to know. You *shall* know how strong and self-sacrificing “ a mere woman ”—“ a beauty ”—“ a woman of fashion ” as she is called, can be !—Not one of the lofty moral principled women, mark you ! And *that* without an effort—for it *was* without an effort. Oh, thank God ! it came spontaneously ! It was not done upon a *principle* !

“ ‘ She interrupted me with outstretched arms. She drew me towards her ! She could not speak for tears ; but her kisses were showered on my cold hands and fevered brow ;

—on this insensible hair even, through which her fingers wandered nervously, while overcome with my own feeling and hers, I rested my head on her bosom. Then she whispered fond epithets in low broken tones; each word simple—exaggerated, as it would sound in other ears, was a cordial to me; for I was faint and sick with the solitude of my own remorseful heart, and its chilling fear that there was henceforth no sweet love for me on this earth. —It was a blessed thing to clasp her in my arms once more! To feel that she loved me, in spite of all! I said so;—and it was then her true womanly soul flashed forth. —She held me back from her, and looking into my face, with a grave, loving smile, said:

“ “ “ Frederick! I see there are many ways of loving, and loving *well*. I have *my* way, as well as grander and wiser folks. I tell you truly, as sure as you hold me now, so sure is it that I rejoice with all my soul that I am your wife! I am too happy to have something to bear for your sake;—too happy to be so bound to you that all the powers of this world, not even your own will, could set me free again! I am deeply glad to have added, as you say I have added, to your happiness;

—glad, even in the darkest depth of our affliction, to be permitted to share it with you. Glad am I,—heartily glad,—to have in some way helped the fulfilment of your desire!—Remember, love, you have an heir—one who will uphold the family name and honour. *I know it, I am sure of it!* One child may be a source of pain to you; the other will bring nothing but joy and noble pride to your heart! But,—listen to me, dear one,—if it were otherwise, if you, Frank, and Arundel were all to become madmen—idiots—do you think *I* should shrink from you—cease to love you—regret that you were my husband and my children? No!—*You* are mine, I am yours! I care not what you are; be you madman—slave—traitor—villain—all that the world holds vilest, I love you, I am your wife, and not even your remorse should drive me from you. Remorse! Remorse for what you have done to *me*? Ah! Come to the heart that loves you; there is no pulsation there that is not caused by love for you and the children—fear for you—hope for you! Do not talk of regret for the past! There is nothing to regret.—‘I ought to have been warned!’—say you?—I thank my God that

I was *not* warned!—Had I been warned, I should not have been yours; for I did not know what love meant till after I was your wife. I thank God I was not warned; or I might have shrunk from being yours, because you were *stricken by Him!*”

“Suddenly he stopped speaking.—His face was livid, his eyes wildly staring; his hand shook like that of one palsied, as he pointed to something out in the park, while he gasped forth an inarticulate sound.—I looked, and forgot everything but what I saw—

“A high mettled horse, with the young viscount on its back, was tearing across the park, pursued by a groom. On went the fiery animal, dashing past trees, whose lower branches the child escaped as by a miracle—rearing, plunging, turning suddenly; playing every dangerous trick that horses are wont to play, in order to throw off a rider. It is a mystery to me, now, how the boy kept his seat, though he says he ‘was not afraid.’ Carleton uttered no further sound till we saw the creature suddenly dart towards the lake. The descent to it is precipitous in that part. On dashed the horse, and plunged down the bank out of our sight, but certainly into the deep

water. Then Carleton gave a groan, and sank on the floor.

“The young French secretary was in the next room. I ran to find him, and we raised my poor friend and placed him on a couch. He was still insensible, and I left François with him while I went to learn the result of the accident to the child, hoping that his mother had not seen it. I ran out towards the lake; and in a short time my fears were relieved by seeing some people approach from that direction, and in the midst of them the little viscount—drenched, but unhurt, and not much frightened. He is a fine, brave child! I hurried him to the house—to the door of the library—that his father might see him as soon as he opened his eyes. But I heard sounds when I opened the door which made me send the boy away.

“I entered alone. It was as I feared. Carleton’s reason was gone. He sat up, laughing and talking wildly to François, who understood what was the matter, and whose face wore a look of mingled horror and affection.

“I went to the countess. She is, indeed,

very different from what I once thought. In less than ten minutes our plans were arranged and in process of execution. She ran to see her husband. He did not know her. Asked who was '*that lady!*' Oh! that beautiful face of hers! How pale! how awe-stricken it was! But she retained presence of mind, and spoke a few words to François. He was to go with her and the earl to Dr. Ward immediately, if he would.

" '*Mais certainement! Si madame le veut,*' he replied, quietly.

"The carriage was already ordered. In a quarter of an hour I stood with Miss Price at the hall-door, and saw it drive down the avenue, on its way to P —. Lady Carleton took her maid and two men-servants, who rode outside; and François de Merville, who rode inside with her and my poor friend, who was then perfectly quiet and harmless, sinking fast into a state of stupor. She grasped my hand convulsively as we parted, and I noticed that her fair face was colourless and almost stern as she pressed her lips to poor Miss Price's cheek.

"Fortunately, the whole of the servants' hall were so occupied with the narrow escape

of the viscount this morning, that no one of them but the maid and the two men who went with the carriage have the slightest idea of the cause of this sudden journey. I do not think it can be kept secret long; but as Lady Carleton is very desirous that it should not be known, we shall do all we can to conceal it. Frank is none the worse for his ride and ducking this morning; but Sam, the groom, who had been showing him the new horse, is terribly afraid of being dismissed. He was not to blame, I find from Frank himself, who never tells a lie. The boy, it seems, got on the horse (after repeated warnings from the man not to do so) when no one was watching him, and of course the animal darted off out of the stable-yard directly, to the consternation of poor Sam.

“ ‘Never mind, Sam,’ said the child, when I came to make an inquiry into the origin of the accident; ‘I’ll tell Mr. Hastings all about it. I was a naughty boy. Sam said *don’t* ever so many times, and I said *I would*, and I *did*. I got on Scamp. Scamp ran away, and got in the water, and I got wet. Don’t let papa scold Sam when he comes home!’ I could not help kissing the boy; and I assured Sam that he should not lose his place.”

* * * * *

A great change took place in consequence of the Earl of Carleton's sudden illness. Within a fortnight after the events just related, the castle was shut up, and the whole family was transported to London, as Lady Carleton wished to be near her husband, who was placed under Dr. Ward's care. Her letters of business to the steward at Carleton, and to the manager of her own valuable estates at North Ashurst, seem to have been written at the suggestion of my grandfather. She writes to him as to a brother; and reports minutely the progress of the earl's case. Her brother, Mr. Morton, lives with her for some time. At the end of six months, the earl's recovery was announced. This return to his family seems to have been a source of joy to every member of it. My grandfather was invited to join in their happiness. He went to London, and found his friend in a sound state of mind; but so weak in body, that Dr. Ward had ordered him to the south of France, or to Italy, for the winter. The peace of Amiens had just opened the Continent to the English. As Lord Carleton could not bear

the idea of parting again from his family, Lady Carleton decided at once that she and the children should travel with him. My grandfather and François were found of great use in making the necessary arrangements for the journey; the earl himself taking a lively interest in all that went on, though confined to the house by the doctor's orders. The travelling party consisted of the earl and countess and Miss Price, the two children, François de Merville, the nurses, and my lady's maid, besides men-servants. One of these was named Maddox; he was a young man from Dr. Ward's establishment, accustomed to the management of the insane. It was by Lord Carleton's own desire that this young man accompanied them. He wished to take every precaution in case of another attack.

This Maddox was the same person who used to walk up and down the terrace beneath Lord Arundel's apartments when I was a child, and whose business there puzzled me so much. When the family went abroad, Maddox was placed under the direction of François; and was found very useful in many ways, as the countess reports in her letters from Italy,

being "a well-conducted, obliging person," who spoke "French and Italian well enough to act as interpreter-general for the servants," and who was "so attached to the children, especially to Arundel, that she was never at all uneasy when she knew they were with him or François." Maddox has ever since maintained a high character in the family. His professional services, as I find from the countess's letters, were happily not required during the three years the earl remained abroad. During that time he married Ann the nurse; and as his natural talents and miscellaneous acquirements were valued by the earl, he was retained in the household. It would not be easy to say, in one word, what office Maddox occupied; but the earl always considered him indispensable. He excelled in manly exercises; rode, drove, and swam well; had a mechanical turn; was a good deal of a carpenter, and somewhat of a chemist; there was no trade of which he had not some knowledge; and wherever he went his faculties were on the alert to acquire new information. He was fond of children, and delighted in imparting his acquirements. François de Merville also devoted much time to the children; and be-

sides acquiring the habit of talking French and Italian fluently, they learnt much from him. Miss Price and their mother taught them to read English and to write. Thus, without having a regular tutor, at so early an age, the Viscount Merle and his brother learned practically many useful things, before they were ten years old—things which boys of the lower and middle-classes learn, and which awaken the mental faculties while they exercise the body.

“ Being thoroughly satisfied with the good sense and moral worth of Maddox,” writes the countess to my grandmother, soon after their arrival at Turin, “ we are quite contented to see him carry off the boys every morning to an *atelier*, where something is going on which interests them. At present, the *furore* is for silk reeling, in a factory close by. It is amusing to see Maddox, with his tall herculean frame, striding up the hilly road, and my two darlings bounding along on each side of him, taking five steps to his one, and performing a great many unnecessary digressions in order to get rid of their animal spirits. I must not omit to put up a small flake of spun silk which Arundel brought home to-day, and exhibited

to me with great delight, because it 'was exactly like little Maggie's hair.' He has not a very bad eye for colour, you will see, and has not yet forgotten his favourite. It is a nearer approach to the 'paly gold' of my god-daughter's locks than any flax. By the way, I wish you would not keep her hair so closely cut. I know you will say it is convenient for a clergyman's daughter to have short hair, as long curls require so much time and pains to keep in nice order. But long 'carls,' as Maggie says, 'are so pretty;' and really she has quite an old-fashioned, puritan look. A little, fair-haired Roundhead, with dark brown eyes and eyebrows! She would look much prettier if you would consent to let her hair grow long. You will say that the outward adornment does not belong to my office of godmother. Still, I protest against your making her a fright!"

I was somewhat puzzled by the fact that François de Merville should accompany Lord and Lady Carleton abroad, until I found two letters from the countess to her sister, written before the earl's attack at Carleton, in one of which she gives an account of the deaths of old De Merville and Madeleine. They

were carried off by fever within a week of each other. In the other, dated some weeks after, she writes thus :

“ François is recovering his health and equanimity. High spirits he never had. He now forms one of our household ; and, as he is well educated, and has a passion for books, Frederick finds him invaluable as a librarian and *thinking* factotum. He writes confidential French letters ; takes charge of books and papers, and reads to him. Besides this, he performs, of his own accord, half the duties of a *bonne* to the boys, who seem to think him born for the express purpose of amusing them. They already speak French with delightful inaccuracy. François seems to love them, now, better than any one in the world except “ *Milor*.” Milor’s goodness to poor Madeleine seems to have elevated him to the rank of an archangel, in François’ estimation. Frederick *has* a charming way of conferring obligations ; and I have no doubt he really did some great service to the De Mervilles, though he has never told me a word of the matter.”

After I found these letters, I was no

longer surprised that François travelled with them ; or that the earl himself should speak thus of him, in a letter addressed to my grandfather, dated from Malta, 1804, about three years after their departure from England. They had been driven to that island by the renewal of hostilities with France. The earl was a personal friend of Sir Alexander Ball, who had the command of Malta at that time ; and as the countess felt safe from Bonaparte there, they were in no hurry to return to England until a very safe opportunity presented itself.

“ You are surprised to find that I have not engaged an English tutor, here, for the boys. To say the truth, I am somewhat unconventional on the important subject of education. I do not believe that *learning to read*, even in his own language, is the first step proper to be taken by every boy ; and still less learning to read in a foreign language. It would not trouble me much, if Frank and Arundel could not read English now, when they are just ten years old. They have been learning other things quite as useful as the alphabet. You have no idea how much

manual dexterity they have acquired from Maddox, and how much practical knowledge they have. They take an interest in most handicrafts ; this gives them sympathy with the craftsmen, remember. The French revolution has opened my eyes upon many subjects : among others, upon the necessity for the abolition of class-prejudices—among us who do not labour for daily bread, especially. The men of *my* order must stand by the men of the people. To do this, our children must have a far more liberal education than we had. They must learn how the people work—they must be able to understand them. Maddox is a man of the people—a good, clever fellow, and François de Merville is somewhat aristocratic. These two men have not been engaged as tutors ; but the boys have learned from them what they would never have learned from any reverend college professor. First, such things as call forth their senses and perceptive powers—such things as exercise their bodies—such things, in short, as *all* men, in every station, ought to know. After these shall come the education peculiar to the men of the station and country in which they happen to be born. Frank and Arundel shall go to Eton as soon as we return, and I have

no doubt they will ultimately make a fair figure there. At present, they know little of Latin; but I have carried them through the first half of the Eton grammar, and made them *comprehend* a good deal of it, which is more than I could do when I was two years older than they. You ask, in some alarm, what they can do 'besides eat macaroni?' I believe they can explain to you how it is made, and I know they can boil it. Besides this, you must know that they can swim like fish—ride well—walk eight miles and not feel fatigued—they can climb, leap, and run capitally. They can speak fairly and very fluently in French, Italian, and English; and read tolerably in those languages too. Books were never forced upon them; but they both showed an early desire to read. They both sing easy music at sight very correctly, and have sweet voices. They have been allowed to sing in the choir of one of the churches here, to their great delight. Their love of music is very strong still, and it has been gratified fully since they came to Italy. They go to an early mass with François every morning, and Protestant as we are, neither their mother nor I can forbid the gratification of this pure taste. It sounds quite comic to hear

young *English* children talk about Mozart's or Haydn's mass in this or that key. The names of Palestrina and Pergolese are familiar in their mouths as household words. Frank is a famous hand at repeating poetry—and—the multiplication table. They are both fine healthy looking children. Frank is the handsomer and stronger, but Arundel has no appearance of disease about him. Arundel is decidedly *a genius*, his mother says !”

Not long after this letter was written, the Earl of Carleton and his family and suite returned to England. “We are happy to inform our readers,” says an old morning paper which I found wrapped round a bundle of letters, “that the Earl of Carleton is in as perfect health as when he left England. He took part in the debate last night, and made a brilliant speech, which will be found fully reported in another column.

“The Countess of Carleton is also quite recovered from the disorder which caused her to leave our damp climate for the genial air of the south three years ago. She has resumed her place in the starry hemisphere of fashion ; and last evening received a large

party of friends, who thronged eagerly to the house to do honour to her return, and congratulate her on her restoration to health. She has brought, it is reported, some valuable specimens of Italian pottery to add to her collection."

Shortly after, I find a brief note from the earl to my grandfather, begging him to come to London for a few days. The chief object of the visit seems to have been to take the two boys to Eton, and to see "James" (*i.e.* my father), who had been there already two years. The viscount and Lord Arundel are to have lodgings, with François to take charge of them; James is removed from his boarding-house to live with them, at the earl's special request; and as my grandfather says, in a letter to his sister, "to the great delight of the three boys. Frank and Arundel," he adds, "are sure to find the advantage of having a boy of fourteen for their friend on their first introduction to that new world." He seems to have been much pleased with the travelled children, pronouncing them, in every respect, superior to the generality of boys. "They are sure to do well!" he says. "God in mercy avert from that sweet child the doom

which Dr. Ward prognosticated for him! The doctor is pleased with his appearance *now*, and attributes much good to the style of education the earl has adopted. It is a natural one, he says. If that be the case, how unnatural is what is called a *good education*! Certainly these boys are all that one could wish; but, then, I cannot forget that they are naturally superior to most of the boys I ever saw—except their father.”

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PART III.
PARENTS AND CHILDREN.

CHAPTER I.

THE FAMILY AT THE RECTORY.

"Large was his bounty, and his soul sincere,
Heaven did a recompense as largely send."

GRAY.

It fell upon a day—the last of July, 18* *—that there was unwonted stir and bustle at Carleton Rectory. The young folks had a holiday ; James was expected home from Eton for the last time (being in his nineteenth year) ; and all the hay in the rector's two fields was to be carried and stacked before night. It was about noon, and all the family was resting under the great walnut-tree in one of the fields, while the professional haymakers ate their dinners in the distance, and looked picturesque. The Hastings family looked picturesque, too, only in a more polite fashion. Mrs. Hastings and her eldest daughter, So-

phia, *the beauty*—were seated on the top of a hay-cock, with the trunk of a tree rising close behind them. Mrs. Hastings wore the Moslem head-dress, then the *mode* among middle-aged Christian ladies. Her turban was of white muslin, and her gown was blue. Sophia's gown was white, and the only ornament of her head (in every sense) was the pride of her heart—her long auburn ringlets. As both these ladies were dignified and elegant, they were frightened at creeping things, and had spread a shawl between their persons and the hay ; and as this shawl happened to be of a dingy red, it improved the colour of the group. Master Tom and little Clara in rustic costumes, and papa in a long black coat, lay at the feet of the ladies. Mr. Hastings stretched his listless length there, and was happy. 'A straw hat lay beside him. He lay on his back and gazed up into the rustling branches of the tree—thinking of things I will not venture to indicate. He had, at Clara's special request, put his head into her lap. But he soon began to perceive that his pillow had disadvantages. Little Clara was quiet for some time, awed by the "honourable load" which encumbered her knees ; but in ten minutes the awe began

to pass away, and she showed symptoms of mistaking papa for a gigantic doll. First, she begged leave to cover his face with a handkerchief, tucking it down tightly to keep him "from catching cold;" so that he was fain to remonstrate against such suffocating kindness.

"Clara, my pet, I can't breathe!" gasped the half-stifled rector.

"Never mind, papa, dear! You look so funny! There, then!" letting loose a corner of the handkerchief, "there's a corner for you to breathe through! Now lie still, you good, dear, darling papa, and let me hush you to sleep!"

"But, my dear child, I don't want to go to sleep. I can't have that thing over my face any longer. I want to look about me. There! Give me a kiss. Ah! now I can see you, and mamma, and Sophia, and Tom. But where are Maggie and Naldo, and William Grey? I don't see them."

"Oh! they are just *there*, a little farther round the tree, papa." Clara was quiet for a minute, and then the sound of a girl's voice reading aloud was heard on the other side of the tree. It was Margaret, or as my aunt was called in her youth, *Maggie* Hastings,

reading to William Grey, and her little crippled brother Reginald.

Reginald—little Naldo, as he was called—was in early infancy the pride of his mother, for he had been more beautiful than all her other children ; now, he was beloved beyond them all, for he was grievously afflicted with physical weakness and deformity. When Dr. Ward could not find an ailment in all my grandfather's family, Reginald was but four years old. Very soon after, a fall from a tree injured his spine, and at the age of ten he was dwarfed and crippled in his lower limbs, and his poor little body was frightfully twisted. His arms, on the contrary, grew strong, and his hands were well shaped. His head grew large, and the brain was very active ; while the features lost their prettiness, and looked old. The vital power seemed to have concentrated itself in the brain and hands. He was precociously intelligent, and showed a power of skilful and delicate manipulation that was extraordinary. He played cleverly on the violin. His mother loved him with a love unspeakable. But *that* was its fault—it was unspeakable and unspoken. The child soon knew that he was unlike other children. He

had a soul eager for love and sympathy, and he did not meet with it where it should have been found, welling forth as a refreshing fountain, from which he might drink at all times. Mrs. Hastings acted upon a mistaken principle with her little child. She concealed from him as much as she could the difference between him and others ; and, therefore, never allowed herself to condole with him on his privations. She did not encourage him to confide his griefs or his repinings to her ; she was uniformly kind, and gentle, and forbearing with him ; but she was never tender nor sympathetic in manner. She dreaded to show him what she felt, lest she should awaken in him a consciousness of the truth, and thus cause a suffering which she believed he would escape—at least in childhood—if she and those about him refrained from the expression of their pity for him. Alas ! poor mother ! she must have put a strong check upon her heart. None but her husband knew how dearly she loved Reginald. That love was the only *passion* of her life. It was an exquisitely painful pity—a timid reverence for the affliction of the child of her bosom, which threw, as strong passion so often does, a restraint or an unnaturalness

into her manner. She was never playful with him; she could not lift, smilingly, that poor distorted body; she could not talk gaily to him the childish nonsense that soothes a childish ear, for the tears came up into her throat as she saw his feeble signs of merriment. At such times she would look upon him with a sad kind of awe, praying internally that God would "temper the wind to her shorn lamb;" and the child, seeing only the grave face, mistook the sadness for severity. By degrees, little Reginald shrank from his grave mother, who eyed him so seriously, and took refuge with Margaret, *the wag* of the family.

He loved to be with Maggie, because she made him laugh, and sang to him, and told him funny tales, and listened to the tales he told in return. But besides her drollery, Maggie had qualities which Reginald, like most sensitive children, discovered very early—she had unselfish habits, and a generous, warm heart. He could unfold his little griefs to her—talk to her about himself, and his difference from other people. He could sit in her lap and weep on her shoulder, because he

was not able to run about with the others, and because he was "so ugly."

"Oh, yes," he would say, on such occasions, "he knew he *was* ugly. He often looked in the glass to see. Oh! It was all very well for her to say that people would love him just the same, though he was ugly. He knew better than that, though! *She* might, perhaps; but other people would not. *How* did he *know* they would not? Oh, very well. He knew by their faces. Besides, he knew by himself. He did not like people that were ugly. He did not like William Grey—he was so ugly."

"Then he could not like her," his sister observed.

"Oh! It's different about *you*, Maggie; you are my own, own sister. But you won't mind my saying so, will you, dear? I *do* wish, very often, that you were pretty; as pretty as Sophia."

On the day of the hay-making, as Margaret and Naldo were waiting for his little chaise to draw him into the hay-field, they happened to get upon this very subject, and he wished again that Margaret "looked as nice and

pretty as Sophia.—Her cheeks were too red ! Her arms and neck were too tanned ! If she would take care of herself, she might grow up as pretty as Sophy.”

Margaret laughed at him, and said, “ That if it would please him she would certainly try and grow up pretty ; but of all the people she ever knew, there was not one who thought so much about good looks as he did. There were Lord Merle and Arundel Raby, great big boys now, more than fourteen years old, they had lived in Italy, where the people were all beautiful, they said ; and in London, and at Eton, and Windsor, where they saw numbers of fine and handsome people ;—and then, they saw each other—and Naldo would allow that *that* was a beautiful sight ? ”

“ Ah, yes ! ” said Naldo ; “ if one could find a good fairy to make us as strong, and graceful, and beautiful as they are ! ”

“ And yet, when they come down to the castle in the holidays, and come here for their lessons with us, they don’t seem to think only about the beautiful ones ! ”

“ Oh, no ! ” said Naldo ; “ they seem to like you better than Sophia, though she is so much older, and quite a pretty young lady ;

—so tall and straight, and such beautiful ringlets.—But, then, Maggie, you are clever at lessons, and are able to do some of the things they do, and I suppose they like that!”

“Oh, no, they don’t, though!” laughed Maggie, merrily. “At least Frank didn’t like my being able to construe the *Æneid* as well as himself the last holidays.”

Naldo laughed too. “*Better*, you mean, Maggie. Papa said that you translated Virgil a great deal better than Lord Merle. You, a girl, too! No. He got very red when you took his place. He didn’t like that, I am sure. He thought it a disgrace.”

“I don’t see why it should be,” replied Maggie. “It would be an odd thing, I think, if I *couldn’t* translate Virgil, when I’ve been taught Latin by such a Latinist as papa, almost ever since I could read. Now, Frank never began Latin properly till he was more than ten years old. I wish I knew French and Italian as he and Arundel Raby do! If Sophia and I had gone to a London boarding-school like Charlotte Grey, we should have been learning French instead of Latin all this time, and the wiseacres hereabouts would not see anything wonderful in young ladies learn-

ing French ! If we could translate Racine better than the boys, nobody would hold up hands in astonishment. Now, I'm sure Racine is ten times more difficult than Virgil. French puzzles me very much."

"That's because it's as strange and new to you as Latin is to other girls. But what were you going to say about my caring so much for good looks, and Lord Merle and his brother not seeming to think about them?"

"Why, that is precisely what I was going to say, Naldo. They, and James (he is very handsome, and strong and active, too, you know), and Lady Carleton."

"Ah ! she *is* beautiful," exclaimed Naldo. "How I love to look at her !"

"Well, dear, none of them seem to mind when people are not beautiful. They like them all the same as if they were ; it does not make any difference in their liking. They like me, and they like you very much. It would not be quite kind or fair to judge of people only by their looks. Little children do that ; but when we grow older we find that plain people — ugly people—are often more lovable than pretty and graceful ones. Now, all the people we love best happen to be good-

looking — Papa, Mamma, Lady Carleton, James, Lord Merle, and Arundel Raby—and yet they never speak about good looks. I don't think they ever think about what sort of eyes, and hair, and complexions, and figures people have, as *you* do. You seem to think so much about the outside of people. I'm sure it is a bad habit to encourage. You will get not to like people who are not pretty, and that is wrong. Suppose I, or the rest of us, were to begin to dislike you, because you are not straight?" And Maggie laughed.

A dark glance shot from Naldo's eye for a moment, but Maggie's laugh was so full of pleasant scorn at the idea, that Naldo laughed too, and kissed her. He was the better for the laugh and the kiss. "*You* never would do that!" he said.

"I should think not, indeed! Now, I'll tell you a little thought that has come into my mind lately.—Really, beautiful people don't generally care much about beauty in their friends, and husbands, and wives. You know the old Greek story about Venus being married to Vulcan. But ugly people like me —(well, *plain* if you like it best; but it's only a polite word for ugly!)—and deformed people

like *you* generally think a great deal too much about good looks—we think them of more importance than they really are. Just as poor people think—Oh! if they had but a great deal of money, how much happier they would be!—how much admired and respected!—and just as sick persons envy those in health. It comes from envy and vanity—I am sure it does, Naldo! You must leave off caring so much for pretty faces, and so must I.”

“I don’t think *you* care for them very much,” said Naldo, looking at her, after a pause in which he had been carefully taking in what she said. “You are a great deal too careless about your frock and your hair to think much about how you look, or you might make yourself look a great deal better than you do. Whoever saw a girl turned thirteen, and as tall as you are, going about in that style? Lord Merle said you were not a bit like any other girl last holidays.”

“I don’t care a bit for what Lord Merle said!” replied Maggie, quickly. “If mamma does not think I am too big for trousers and a short frock, I need not care; and I am sure, Naldo dear,” she replied, recovering her temper immediately, and smiling, “you would

not say a word against my short, straight hair, and my large straw hat, if you only knew what *I* know about beautiful curls. I see what Sophia's cost her. Oh, dear! oh, dear! Naldo, it would drive me mad to do what she does to the outside of that pretty head of hers, every night and morning." And Margaret went through a pantomimic performance of brushing and curling before an imaginary looking-glass, which she consulted with solemn intensity, advancing a little and retreating a little, to try the effect of this or that position of a curl. This imitation of Sophia was so truthful and so funny, that Naldo laughed heartily. At length, when they had both laughed enough, Naldo said, "But still, Meg, don't you think Sophia's hair is so very, very pretty, that it is worth a little trouble to make the best of it?"

"Yes, dear, I do; because it really is no trouble to her. She likes it. Perhaps if I had dark auburn hair like hers I might do as she does, instead of laughing at her. Only I don't think I could go to bed with that forest of knotty curl-papers all over my head. I would rather go to bed with a head like Bottom, the Weaver! But don't tell Sophy

that; I should get well scolded for my unlady-like taste. Heighho! I shall never do for a fine lady!"

"Never mind, Meg; you will do very well to live in the wood with me! But—here comes William Grey with my chaise. It will be pleasant on the hay under the walnut-tree. I can sit there and watch you all; and when you are tired you can come and sit beside me and read something aloud. I love to hear you read. You have such a dear, nice voice; and I understand what you read as well as when I read myself. Let's have Bottom, the Weaver, to-day. It's such fun! And now I shall be sure to think of you with his head."

They had been talking in the study, near the open window which faced the lawn. Margaret sat in the arm-chair which their father used to occupy in lesson time; and little Reginald, though he was nearly eleven years old, sat in her lap. They always sat thus when they were alone, and Reginald found his heart soften and his tongue loosen when he felt his sister's arms clasping him, and he could lay his head on her shoulder. Margaret had a *caressante* manner towards him, and he loved to be caressed. It was an

assurance that he was not too much unlike other people to be loved. When others were present Margaret never took Reginald on her lap, but sat beside him on the sofa. It made his infirmity more conspicuous, she thought, to be nursed like a baby ; she dreaded, even more than he did, the observations that careless spectators might make about his peculiarities. She was most anxious to preserve what might be called the dignity of his affliction. She always kept a shawl in readiness to throw over his lower limbs when he lay on the sofa in the drawing-room, and propped him up so well with cushions, that you would not have known he was different from other boys, except for the peculiar expression which is always to be seen in the face of a deformed person. Had you seen Reginald enthroned thus, amusing himself with his violin, his arms and hands showing considerable vigour, you would not have suspected the extent of his infirmity. Margaret and Reginald were the only two of my grandfather's family who had any great natural taste for music ; this was, of course, another strong bond of union between them. The strength of that bond can only be estimated

by two or more persons who love and practise music in the midst of an unmusical family. While they were sitting thus, Reginald's garden-chair, drawn by a Newfoundland dog of gigantic dimensions, and conducted by a boy about fourteen years old, of dimensions to match the dog, stopped before the window.

"Good morning, Cæsar ! Good morning, Brutus !" cried Margaret.

"*Bow-wow !*" barked the dog, in the deepest of canine accents.

"How d'ye do," growled the boy, in the most inarticulate of boyish voices. Both dog and boy looked very pleased to be noticed. Which was Cæsar and which was Brutus it was not easy to tell.

The boy was William Grey, a pupil of my grandfather's ; the second son of the lady and gentleman of that name who were present at Margaret's christening. He was what his parents called a remarkably fine-grown lad, *i.e.* he was a great, overgrown behemoth of a boy. He was what they called *rather slow*, but what everybody else called profoundly stupid, except, indeed, Margaret Hastings, who always said "Brutus was not half so stupid as he seemed !" It was she who gave

him that nickname, partly on that very account, and partly because of a certain passage in Aurelius Victor.

Poor William Grey ! with a singular incapacity for verbal acquirement, being unable to speak or to read his mother tongue with anything like correctness or fluency at the age of eleven, he was sent by his father to Mr. Hastings "*to learn Latin and all other things proper for a gentleman.*"

"We have not pushed him at all, you will find ; but he really must be doing something in the classics soon, as we intend him for the Church. Get him as forward as you can, my dear sir !" said the father.

Mr. Hastings found not only that he had not been *pushed*, but that no power of pedagogy could ever push him very far. Nature had put her veto on the measure. She said plainly enough, "Books are not the tools this creature requires." But his pastors and masters, and society at large, recognised only one form of education ; and the boy of bone and muscle, who would have been happy felling trees in the backwoods, breaking in horses, reaping, ploughing, thrashing, building houses, or quarrying stone, was set down to learn ma-

thematics, Latin, and Greek, for five or six hours a day. He was so very dull, that if he had not been a well-disposed boy, Mr. Hastings would have sent him home to his father as incurably incapable. To my aunt's credit, be it told, though she was a clever, lively girl, and William Grey's blunders were very funny, she never laughed at him half as much as the others did. She saw that he really took great pains to learn. When she heard her father talk about sending him home, she felt for the poor boy very much. That same evening, when William Grey was poring over his lesson in the study, long after the others had done theirs, and were gone out to play, Margaret sat down beside him, made him take his two huge hands from his two huge ears, moved his elbows from the table, and announced that it was her intention to help him with his lesson. William Grey sighed heavily, and said that he never should be able to learn it.

"Nonsense !" said Margaret, laughing.

"You a boy, and let anything conquer you !"

"But I am so stupid."

"Oh ! you are clever enough sometimes ! Look at that beautiful garden-chair you have

made for Naldo ! None of our boys could do that."

"No, I know that!" said the dunce, rubbing his forehead with pleasure, and kicking out his long legs. "None of you !—but Lord Merle or Arundel could make a better one. You see, Miss Margaret, I never can learn anything out of a book. As soon as I see anything in print, it seems to set my senses all sixes and sevens."

"Let me see what your lesson is about," said Margaret, good-naturedly. "Aurelius Victor, of course ! You've been in this book a shameful time ! However, if you will let me help you, you shall get out of it in two months."

"*Let* you help me!" exclaimed the poor boy. "Oh, Maggie, I can't tell you how much obliged I should be ! My father is so kind to me, and he has set his heart on my getting on with my studies. He will be so disappointed when he finds I am too stupid to learn what other boys learn." And he sighed heavily. "You are all so clever ! It quite puts me out, when I *do* know a lesson, to think how much better even that little

Reginald knows it than I ever could. I get quite down-hearted when I see how clever you are, every one of you, and how very dull and stupid I am !”

“Come, come!” said Maggie, encouragingly. “You are not nearly so stupid as you think ! If you were very stupid, you would not be sensible enough to know that you were not quite so quick as we others are. Papa said one day, that while your body was growing so fast your mind could not be very active, and that he thought in a year or two you would come out bright.”

“Did *he* say so, eh ?” asked the great boy, making more plunges with his legs.

“He did ; but don’t kick me for it ! I declare, I might just as well go and sit in Donald’s stall as come and sit by you. Now, tell me,” said she, taking up the dog’s-eared dirty book, “what is your lesson about ? Do you know ?”

“Oh, yes ! I know what it is about. It’s about a fellow named Brutus. You know he was afraid of being killed by another fellow, who was the king, and so he made believe he was a fool. He knew the king wouldn’t think it worth while to kill him, unless he was

clever enough to invent mischief. And then he went and lived among the king's children, and was brought up with them, and pretended he was very stupid, while all the time he was a great deal cleverer than they were. That's why they called him Brutus."

"Oh, oh!" said Maggie. "You know all that, do you? *That's* the trick you're playing us, I fancy!—You see you are not the first person who has passed himself off for stupid when he was not. Come! Brutus. It won't do to sham stupid with *me*, now," she said, with a provoking smile and grimace. "You know the meaning of your lesson, so, now, come and read it—and construe it properly. Head up, Brutus! Begin!"

William Grey burst out laughing, as her simple jest penetrated slowly into the dark recesses of his mind. "That's a good'un! I wish, by Jove, it was true!"

"Don't talk about Jove!" exclaimed Margaret. "The other Brutus pretended to know nothing about him. Now, leave off laughing!" she added, pursing up her mouth and pointing with her finger to the first sentence of the lesson. "You know the meaning of it, so surely it can't be difficult."

"You're out *there*, Miss Maggie, clever as you are! I understand the meaning, but I'll be shot if I can understand the *words*, and the way they come in Latin—the cart before the horse—and *always* the first word last. And, then, those horrible declensions and irregular verbs!"

Margaret tapped with her finger on the book. "Talking won't learn a lesson, Brutus! Begin!"

He began; and his companion helped him over his difficulties so cheerfully—making fun of the genitive and dative cases and pluperfect tenses in such a surprising way, that by the time his task was accomplished a new light shone in on his mind.

"Thank you, Maggie. I don't wonder, *now*, that you are so fond of your lessons. You turn them all into play."

"No, I don't, Brutus! It used to be no play to prepare six or seven pages of *Cæsar* every day. But you shall judge for yourself before long; for as sure as I mean to call you Brutus, and tell no one *why*, so sure shall you be pushed into '*De Bello Gallico*' in less than two months. So, now, make up your mind

to have me come every day and see that you learn your lesson."

"Dear Maggie! you are very good-natured. I always thought you laughed at me."

"So I do. Who could help it?" laughed Maggie. "If you could see what antics you play with your great arms and legs, *you* would laugh too."

"Oh! but I mean laugh at me because I am so stupid."

Maggie left off laughing, and stroked the rough hair of the great dunce, and looked kindly in his face, and told him that she should think it a very ill-natured thing to laugh at any boy because he was not clever. "You know, Brutus,—(you won't mind my calling you *that*, will you?)—it's such a *nice* name for you, you know." And her brown eyes glanced into his with a mirthful expression.

"Mind it! Lord bless you! I like it!" And the great boy became red with excitement and pleasure, and fidgeted about fearfully with his legs, and longed very much to hug Maggie in his arms, and tell her that she was the kindest, cleverest, best little girl in the

world, and that he loved her almost as well as Carlotta, his favourite sister.

"Well, then—you know, Brutus, we are not all born alike. It's not your fault if you are not quick at books, and it's not my fault if I can't understand that machine you are making. It's very silly of you to fancy that everybody is cleverer than you are. Arundel likes you very much; he says you have a great talent for mechanics."

"Does he like me, though?" asked the boy, starting up in delight. "I'm so glad, for I like him better than anybody, almost. I don't know what it is about him that makes me think so much of him. He knows all the things that you all know,—you Hastingses."

"Oh! a great deal more than any of us," said Maggie, "except Henry and James, and they are so much older."

"And then he can do all sorts of things that I can do; and a great many more that I can't. And he invents such clever improvements. And he's not a bit proud and conceited, like Lord Merle. He never seems as if he knew that he was so much better than everybody. He goes for walks with me, you know, and I show him the foxes' holes and

the badgers', and we have fine fun together. Clever as he is about books, he don't despise me because I'm a stupid fellow ; that makes me like him !" And William Grey became quite enthusiastic. " Now, Maggie, if I could only believe that you would care for me, and Arundel Raby would care for me, I should set to work, tooth and nail ; and—by Jove ! I'd see who'd be master, me or my stupid brains !"

" Bravo, Brutus !" exclaimed Maggie, patting him on the head encouragingly. Then, understand, that you, and I, and Arundel, are friends. I really *do* like you, William ; and so does he. May I tell him all about this ? You shall see ! He will offer himself to you for a friend, just as I do. We shan't care for you, you know, *quite* as much as we do for each other. We have been great friends ever since we were babies, and mean to be so all our lives."

" Of course not !" interrupted William. " You two clever fellows *couldn't* care for me as much as you do for each other.—If you will only care for me half as much, I shall be quite contented.—You're laughing because I called you a *fellow*. But I forgot that you

were not a boy. I'm sure *that* was stupid, for you are a great deal kinder and gentler than any boy." And his heavy face was lighted up by grateful intelligence.

"Not kinder and gentler than Arundel," added Maggie, by way of qualification.

Thus the good-natured, clever girl, bound the good-natured, stupid boy to her. Stupid as he was, he was intelligent enough to devise acceptable ways of showing his gratitude. He bore with Reginald's ill-concealed contempt for his awkwardness, ugliness, and stupidity, and carried him about for Maggie—made all sorts of seats and contrivances for making him comfortable. When the joyful day came (within the promised time, too) that William Grey first read aloud to Mr. Hastings in Latin the antique fact that "all Gaul is divided into three parts,"—the master was so delighted, that he sent home his pupil for a holiday, that his parents might be delighted too. And delighted enough they were. Mr. Grey gave his son ten pounds on the spot. As soon as he had possession of this money, William Grey, without saying a word to any one, walked off to Carleton Park, up through the Long Wood, to Green, the keeper's house.

There, by means of half a guinea for his trouble, he induced that worthy to set off with him directly in his taxed cart to P——. The object of this impromptu visit to the town was to purchase a certain very large Newfoundland dog, which William Grey thought (for he was shrewd enough in some things) that Green would be able to purchase for five guineas, but which he, a gentleman's son, would not be able to get for less than twenty. The event was as he expected, and they drove home in the taxed cart with the great dog snugly ensconced between them.

The next day, when William Grey returned to Carleton Rectory, the great dog went with him, and was presented to Reginald as a fit animal to draw the garden-chair, which the giver had made. Reginald was delighted beyond measure. Dogs were the animals he loved best next to girls, he said; and there never was in all the world such a magnificent dog as this.

"What name shall we give it, Maggie?" cried out the child, as William Grey made the dog run and jump on the lawn, before them.

"Suppose we call him *Cæsar*!" — said Maggie. "Come here, Brutus!—What do

you say to our calling that *other* great dog Cæsar, in memory of yesterday ?”

“ I say, yes !” laughed William Grey.

* * * * *

These antecedents having been detailed, the reader will be able to comprehend the state of matters under the walnut-tree, where Reginald and Maggie, Brutus and Cæsar, were to be seen at noon, a little apart from the group already described, and yet so disposed, that a person coming from the house could see them both together. Reginald reclined on cushions in the little chaise. His violin-case lay across the front, so as to serve for a table, on which rested a sketch-book. He was drawing very fast with a black-lead pencil. Margaret, attired in a plain nankeen frock and trousers, with a white tippet and sleeves, and a broad straw hat, sat on the hay, which Brutus had heaped up so high, that it raised her to a level with Naldo in his chaise. She was reading part of the “ Midsummer Night’s Dream” aloud. Brutus and Cæsar both lay at her feet. Cæsar slept, curled up in a heap. Brutus was wide awake, though he looked the very reverse. He was curled up in a heap,

too, with his head propped upon Cæsar. If a penance-deviser of the Inquisition had ordered him to assume that attitude for an hour, he would have called it very cruel; but when Maggie suggested to him that he "must be miserable lying like that," he declared that, "By Jove," he "never was more comfortable." "Go on, about the moonshine and the wall, and all that rubbish. I wonder what you can both see in it to laugh at!"

" 'There is not a more fearful wild-fowl than your lion, living.' "

He muttered to himself after a minute or two: "That is downright nonsense, Maggie! It must be a misprint! Why, Reginald, it ought to be wild *beast*, not *fowl*, you know, of course!"

To poor Brutus's complete discomfiture, his emendation of Shakspeare was received with a peal of laughter from Maggie, in which Reginald joined heartily. Mrs. Hastings, whose ear was always open to the lightest sound of pleasure or pain from Reginald, and who had placed herself so that she could see him when she turned her head, was moved to tender mirth herself when she saw Reginald in a complete paroxysm of laughter, drumming

with both fists on the violin-case in his ecstasy. What would she have given to be able to make him laugh so heartily!

"What *are* you laughing at?" growled Brutus, looking at Maggie, and getting somewhat nettled.

"Oh! don't, don't—pray don't!" gasped Maggie, faint with laughter.

"What joke is Grey up to now?" asked Tom, flinging himself round. "Let's hear his last good thing."

"See, papa! see!" said Maggie, stopping her merriment; "there is Henry coming across the field. He has got some news. He is holding up something—letters or newspapers."

Every one became still, and watched the progress of Henry Hastings. He was running fast.

"I hope nothing has happened to prevent James's return to-day," said Mrs. Hastings to her husband.

"He would not flourish a newspaper in that way, mamma, if that were the case," said Sophia. "Perhaps Lord Merle and his brother are come."

"That wouldn't be in a newspaper, Sophy,"

said Tom. "What do you think it is, papa?" he inquired, seeing his father rise eagerly.

"What news, my boy?" shouted Mr. Hastings, making a trumpet of his two hands.

"Hurrah! hurrah!" shouted Henry, in reply.

"Maggie! Maggie! Do you think Bonaparte has won another battle?" whispered Naldo, eagerly.

Brutus heard the whisper, and replied sensibly enough—"He wouldn't be shouting 'hurrah!' like that for Bonaparte."

On came Henry—a tall, active youth of twenty—flourishing above his head the letters and newspapers he had brought from the castle. "Hurrah! hurrah! News! news!" he cried, flinging himself on the hay among them. "Father, you are right! That fool Lord —— is out, and Lord Carleton is in his place! The papers are all full of it! Such a commotion! There's a note for you from her ladyship. She is going to London tomorrow morning! There's news for you, too, girls and boys—for of course Lord Merle and Arundel won't come here this vacation."

"Oh! Oh-o-o-o!" groaned the young folks.

"But James is coming here to-day, my dears," said Mrs. Hastings, by way of consolation.

"Any more news, Henry?" asked Sophia.

"Not actual news;—only there's a full, true, and particular account of the great battle of Wagram, near Vienna, which happened on the sixth of this month. I do not know how many were killed and wounded, but it seems to have been a terrible slaughter—a very hard-fought affair. There's some talk, too, mother, that that low brute Bonaparte is going to divorce his wife, and marry one of the Austrian archduchesses."

"That must be the talk of his enemies, my dear. 'La grande nation' would never bear such an act as that. What would Murat say, with his *honneur et les dames*?"

"We shall see," said Henry. "It's my opinion that if Bonaparte told them it was for the honour and glory of *la grande nation* to throw their wives into the Bay of Biscay, every Frenchman would be ready to contribute *Madame* to the general immersion. Politeness and consideration for women!—Fudge! That's all very well for evening parties in Paris. But let a woman take care

how she trusts to a Frenchman's *honour* when it's to his interest to be dishonourable."

"Hey-day! National antipathy breaking out as usual, Henry!" exclaimed his father, laughing. "Take care your sisters don't marry Frenchmen."

"What a dreadful idea!" exclaimed Sophia.

"There's Lady Carleton's note, my dear," said Mr. Hastings, handing it to his wife. "I must go and read this important news. Henry, my boy, I leave you to superintend the field. Make them work well, and the hay will be all in to-night." Thus saying, the Rector gathered up letters and papers, and walked across the field to the house. The children went on talking and preparing themselves to renew their pleasant labours, while Mrs. Hastings read the following note:

"DEAR MR. HASTINGS,

"At last our party is triumphant, as I prophesied to Frederick two months since it must be, for the very sufficient reason that '*dans le pays des aveugles les borgnes sont rois.*' You will laugh at my ineffectual efforts to conceal my pride in my husband—my conviction that there is not a man in the

country fitter to overcome the present difficulties. It's perfectly ridiculous to talk of C——, or Lord L——, or the Duke of——, at such a crisis. They tried to form a ministry without Frederick—it was utter blindness ;—but they did, and failed. They have learned one good thing by the failure—they never knew before what they could *not* do. It's hard if Frederick and the Duke of Alderney can't do something with the House. They are sure of a majority upon almost every point they want to carry. I am sorry that the doctors sent me down here this month. I have lost the pleasure of being with Frederick during these last three days. Poor fellow, he has had a dreadfully fatiguing time of it—four times to Windsor in three days !—and our house, like all the government offices, fused into one. He says it is a very good thing *I* was not in town, for I should not even have had time to remonstrate with, or congratulate, him ;—that eating, drinking, and sleeping are the vulgar relaxations of ordinary men, but that a new cabinet minister has no leisure for such things. I go up to London to-morrow, of course. He is anxiously expecting my arrival and that of the boys.

They were to have come down here for the vacation, and Frederick himself was to have come with them; but *le roi a changé tout cela*. Now, I go to London, and we all remain there or go to the sea-side; just as it will suit Frederick best. I am sorry for this on many accounts. The boys, too, will be sorry not to spend their holidays with your children. But 'what is to be done when one's father becomes a Minister of State?' as Arundel says, anticipating the event. That boy always sees further than any of us. I am rather anxious about him now. He has worked rather too hard, I fear. François says that hard work is as congenial to him as '*l'eau aux poissons*,' and that no contrivances will keep him from it. He is now in the fifth form—and is looked upon as a prodigy. Frank gets on well too, but he is only in the Remove. He is not at all jealous of Arundel. He seems to look upon it as a settled thing that Arundel should be his superior at school, and 'sees no fun in trying whether a Shetland pony can run as fast as a thorough-bred racer.' 'Perhaps I play first fiddle out of the classes,' he adds. I dare say he does. They are both good boys. Give my love to Mrs.

Hastings, and tell her that as it is Miss Price's birthday, we want Naldo to come when Margaret comes for her lesson this afternoon. She must let them take tea in state with us. Ask Naldo to bring his violin, and tell him I have got a letter from a friend in Vienna, containing an account of poor Haydn's death, which I will read to him.

“ Yours ever truly,

“ C. C.”

When Mrs. Hastings asked Naldo if he would like to go, he looked much pleased, and said that he should.

“ Shall I have time to practise some of those Mozart things, Maggie, before we go ? ” he asked.

“ Oh ! yes, lots of time,” said Maggie. “ You can practise now, dear ; for we are all going to work again. There comes the cart. Papa said the hay must be finished to-night. If I go out to tea I must do double work now. Where's my fork, Brutus, you ‘ fearful wild-fowl ? ’ ”

Naldo laughed ; Brutus looked cross, but got the fork.

“ I say, Maggie, a pretty sort of a sister

you are, to be going out to tea the day James is coming home!" said Tom, who loved to tease.

"Very wise you are!" said Brutus. "The London coach don't get to P—— till after eight, and James couldn't be here till after nine; and you know they will be back from the castle by that time for Naldo to go to bed."

"I say, Maggie," whispered Naldo, "I do so want to hear all about that battle! Do you think papa would let you read me the account out of the newspaper?—I can't practise a note till I hear it."

Maggie spoke to her mamma aside, who said she would stay and read the account of the battle to Naldo while his sister went to amuse herself with the others. Reginald would rather have had Maggie; but he was much obliged to his mamma for reading to him. When she had finished she kissed him and went away, leaving him busied with his violin. He did not practise at all, but played strange snatches of extemporaneous music—imitating the booming of great cannon—the gallop of horses—the clash of swords—the confused uproar of a battle-field—and the low moans

of the dying. These strange, wild, discordant sounds so wrought on the nervous system of poor Cæsar, that after grunting and shaking himself, and casting imploring looks at the juvenile musician, he set up a desperate howl, which made Naldo lay down the instrument and try to coax him into good humour. While thus employed, Maggie came up to ask "what was the matter?"

"Oh, nothing! only I was trying to make out the battle of Wagram, and Cæsar didn't like it."

CHAPTER II.

AN EVENING AT THE CASTLE — WITH NO REFERENCE TO
MADAME DE GENLIS.

—“A soft and solemn-breathed sound
Rose like a stream of rich distilled perfumes,
And stole upon the air.”

Comus.

“As though a rose should shut and be a bud again.”
St. Agnes’ Eve.

It was evening. Lady Carleton’s beautiful private room wore a festal air. The windows were thrown open, and the silken curtains were looped back to admit the glow of sunset and the gently rising breeze. The light and the breeze passed through a bowery screen of exotics arranged in the embrasure of each window; and as they passed they performed what, to little Naldo, seemed like a work of enchantment;—gilding the pale blossoms of the oleander and the Provence rose; firing the

rich masses of the cactus flower with an intenser crimson ; waving the fans of the mimosa and the delicate wreaths of starry-blossomed creepers whose names he knew not, and which were the more beautiful and wonderful to him on that account. Soft perfumes from the rose, the acacia, and the heliotrope, shaken out at every gentle motion of the wind, wandered dreamily into the apartment, mingling with other odours from fresh fruits half hidden in leaves, that were heaped up

“ On golden dishes and in baskets bright
Of wreathed silver.”

Miss Price had also caused the housekeeper to bring forth from her closet

——“ a heap
Of candied-apple, quince, and plum, and gourd,
With jellies soother than the creamy curd,
And lucent syrups tinct with cinnamon,
Manna and dates, in argosy transferr'd
From Fez ; and spiced dainties every one
From silken Samarcand to cedared Lebanon.”

Miss Price was particularly fond of making a feast for children ; and as this was her birthday, Maggie and Naldo were to be regaled in fine style.

The news of this change of ministry ; the

fulfilment of her husband's ambitious hopes ; the brilliant success of Arundel at Eton ; the return of both boys in perfect health ; the anticipated pleasure of embracing them, and of witnessing the triumph of her husband on the morrow (for on the evening of the next day she was to be in London), had given colour to Lady Carleton's cheek and gaiety to her manner. Miss Price's affectionate eye discerned somewhat of the old vivacity in her former pupil. Graceful and elegant she always was ; and this evening she wore, in honour of the birthday, a rich dress of silver-grey satin, which so bewitched little Maggie by its beauty, that she caught herself feeling the folds of it secretly, as she sat beside the wearer, and wondered whether any one ever wore so delicate and soft a dress before. The presence of Maggie and Naldo had also conspired, for the moment, to restore Lady Carleton's natural good spirits and graceful *insouciance*. She was fond of the children, especially of her god-daughter ;—in whose opening character she thought she discerned many rare and noble qualities, and whose enthusiastic affection and reverence for herself she could not but perceive. The affec-

tion between Maggie and the countess was strong and genuine. I believe it caused a slight feeling of jealousy in my grandmother's mind; for Maggie would confide many things to Lady Carleton which she shrank from telling her more dignified and less sympathising mother, although her love for her was profound. Maggie never could account for this to her own satisfaction. "I can say things to you, dear Lady Carleton, which I cannot say to mamma. I'm afraid of her sometimes. I am never afraid of you!"

As Naldo lay on the soft couch near the window, his eyes roamed in ecstasy from the sunlit-sky and the bright flowers to the table of white marble on which the dainties already mentioned were displayed. They were so pretty to look at! Beyond that *he* cared not for them; he was a sickly child, and instead of enjoying food it was as much as he could do to eat enough to sustain his weakly frame. The rich colouring in the room afforded him a real treat. The roseate walls, the gilded picture-frames, the pictures themselves, and the furniture of ormolu and marqueterie, all lighted up by the glorious sunset, blended in his imagination with the delicious perfumes

and the more delicious music. For Lady Carleton, having given Maggie her lesson, and heard Naldo play on his violin, had kindly complied with the children's request, and was singing for their especial gratification "Angels ever bright and fair." Naldo loved to hear Lady Carleton sing;—he loved flowers and perfumes and magnificent apartments;—he loved dear old Miss Price, and she sat beside him and rested her arm on the cushion that supported his head. More than anybody or anything in the world he loved his sister Maggie; and he could see her then standing at the corner of the pianoforte drinking in every note of the music with her eyes fixed on the singer. As he looked at her a thought came into his mind, and he whispered it to Miss Price.

"Does not Maggie look almost pretty now?"

Miss Price, who was a very good-natured old lady, nodded her head with an approving smile, and Naldo was quite contented. While Lady Carleton is finishing her "soft and solemn-breathed" song, I will give a slight sketch of Maggie, as she appears in a family picture painted about this time, and in which

she is represented attired as she was on this evening. The costume is somewhat more elegant than that of the hay-field and the school-room, although not at all elaborate. It consists of a plain white muslin frock, with a short and full bodice, cut low in the neck, so as to exhibit a pair of pretty rounded shoulders. The sleeves, also, according to the fashion of the time, are very short, and made still shorter by being tied up with narrow blue ribbon of the colour of the sash, much in the style of baby-frocks of the present day. As Maggie's arms, even at that age, were remarkably well-shaped, the very short sleeves are not at all unbecoming, although her sister Sophia reproached her severely when the picture was painted for "allowing them to get so brown that they were not fit to be seen." The artist has given their sunburnt hue and beautiful form with equal accuracy. The head and face are striking, but not pretty. The face is round and ruddy, the mouth rather large, but sensitive and generous—upon the whole, a promising mouth ; the nose neither too large nor too small, not very distinctly cut as yet, but with an irretrievable tendency to point upwards. Taken in conjunction with

the corners of the mouth, you would say the owner of such a nose must have a comic turn of mind. The eyes are decidedly fine, being large, and well set beneath the brows, of a rich hazel brown, uniting fire and softness, tender melancholy and a piquant playfulness. They are fringed with long dark lashes, and curtained by the whitest lids. Above them are straight brows of a dark colour, delicately traced along the edge of the low, broad forehead; which, thanks to the protection of the garden hat, seems never to have been tanned, and is of a pure white, "without freckle or spot." Contrasting strangely with the dark colour of the eyes and eyebrows, parted in the middle, and disposed on each side of the candid brow, are wavy masses of short, flaxen-gold hair. This union of fair hair and dark eyes gives an uncommon look to the face. Some painters have adopted it in their heads of cherubim and juvenile saints; and it seems to me that they have succeeded admirably in conveying an idea of mingled innocence and ardour—spiritual purity and intense human passion. At all events, any physiognomist would attribute these mental characteristics to Margaret

Hastings, as she appears at thirteen. From all that I can learn, my aunt's personal appearance never changed its character, and to me it seems that this union of purity and passion is what made the peculiar charm of her face when I first knew her.—The head is well set on a graceful throat, and is, perhaps, a degree too large for her height. She stands well; firmly, but almost as lightly as a flower on its stalk. She seems to "feel her life in every limb," and to rejoice in existence. She resembles no one else in the family picture, except my father, whose eyes are like hers; but his hair is darker, and his features are regularly handsome.

When the song was finished, no one said "thank you." They were all too full of happiness; the happiness which sweet music brings to the heart; a happiness which expresses itself in a low-breathed sigh, followed by an unconscious smile. Margaret looked lovely for a moment. Lady Carleton caught the expression, and was surprised; she had always regretted that her god-daughter was so odd-looking.

"My dear," said Miss Price, "I think we must send home our visitors about

the time their brother will be coming from P——."

Reginald uttered a dissentient "Oh!"

"You don't want to go, Naldo?" said Lady Carleton, rising from the instrument, and approaching him. "But it is not nearly the time yet."

"No," said the child, in his clear, melancholy voice, "I like to be here. It is so much nicer here than at home! Everything is so beautiful. Even the sunset and the flowers;" and he pointed to the window. "I should like to be here always; would not you, Maggie?"

"If you were always here, it would be no treat, my love," said Miss Price. "A favourite author of your papa's says, 'He that feasts every day, feasts no day.'"

"While you dilate on that very important theme to Naldo, I will fulfil my promise to Maggie, before it grows darker. She and I are going to have a peep at those rooms on the south terrace, which have been shut up so long."

"Had you not better defer seeing them till another time?" said Miss Price. "It will take you some time to look at them."

“Another time!—I am going to London to-morrow. Besides, Maggie and I have a special purpose in seeing them to-night—before I go.”

And Maggie looked so pleased—so brimful of some charming mystery, that Naldo longed to go too. But he could not go without having a servant to carry him, and that would quite spoil the pleasure. Miss Price, who had watched his face, said, “While they are looking at those cold, empty rooms, I will play you some of those airs from the ‘Messiah,’ which you wanted to hear again.”

CHAPTER III.

THE UNINHABITED ROOMS.

"The chambers carved so curiously—
Carved with figures strange and sweet,
All made out of the carver's brain."

Christabel.

LADY CARLETON took Maggie with her down to the great hall. The door was open, and as the evening was very warm they stepped into the court without any additional garment.

"Come, Margaret, my dear!" she said, leading the way towards the south front of the castle. "I think I can find the person I want without help. There he is!" she continued, as they turned an angle and stood on the handsome, but neglected terrace which ran along that side of the castle, and from which, by flights of broad steps—one in the middle and one at each end—you descended

into an old-fashioned Italian garden. On the top step of the middle flight, with his back resting against one of the stone griffins that presided over the balustrade, sat an old man smoking a pipe. His back was towards them as they approached.

"Does Cuthbert keep the keys of the old rooms?" asked Maggie. "I thought Mrs. Fenton had them."

"No. Mrs. Fenton is as superstitious as the inferior servants, who all believe that the terrace-rooms are haunted. Fearing that some one might play tricks and frighten them, I gave the keys to old Cuthbert, who is a sort of *esprit fort*. Ah!" continued the countess, looking with the eye of a mistress at the building, "I wish I could have obliged Miss Price, and made her the housekeeper of Carleton!"

"*A lady*, like Miss Price!" exclaimed Maggie, half indignantly.

"My dear child, I would not degrade Miss Price—I would raise the office of housekeeper. In a noble castle like this an ignorant person should not preside during the owner's absence. If Mrs. Fenton had been a woman of education and taste she would be my deputy, not a

mere machine which requires constant attention. However, Mrs. Fenton is an excellent dame, and a very good housekeeper of the old school. But I shall never place any but a gentlewoman here again."

"What queer things they say of Cuthbert," began Maggie, as she jumped along the terrace beside the slow-moving lady of the castle.

"Hush!" said the latter, with a smile. "He will hear you.—Good evening, Mr. Fenton." Lady Carleton had the aristocratic habit of giving an inferior his full style and title. Every one else at Carleton called the superannuated head-gardener "Old Cuthbert"—much to the annoyance of his wife, who was always known as "Mrs. Fenton;" though her husband presumed upon his connexion, and called her "Betty."

"Good evening, Mr. Fenton."

The old man started, as if awaked from a dream, and turned his dazzled eyes from the sun to the speaker, who had reached him unperceived. In a moment he rose, laid aside his pipe, and taking off his cloth cap, said, with a respectful bow, "Good evening, my lady—good evening, miss."

"Mr. Fenton, I want to look at those rooms directly;" pointing to the windows.

"Certainly!—If your ladyship wishes to see them to-night. Otherwise, I would have them opened and swept and dusted in the morning. You will find them very dirty, my lady."

"I suppose so; but I do not mind that. I do not wish to examine them very minutely. I merely want to see what they are like."

"Very good, my lady. I will get the keys. Perhaps you and the young lady would like to remain here while I go round and open some of the windows. You can step into the rooms from here, without the trouble of going round into the house again. You had better, my lady; for as sure as my name's Cuthbert, you'll be half suffocated with the dust and damp of the shut-up corridor and the auld rooms. They have not been opened since—I do not know when."

"Yes, Mr. Fenton. I think your advice is very good. We will remain here till you open some of those windows. Be as quick as you can, if you please."

The old man bowed, and walked off much faster than Maggie had ever seen him walk.

There was something mysterious about old Cuthbert which excited the curiosity of the Rectory children. He was not a Carleton man; but was a native of some place in the extreme north of England, about which he told strange legendary tales. James Hastings (my father) had spent many a summer half-holiday in the park woods with old Cuthbert, and once or twice Maggie herself had been with them. On these occasions she had been half-frightened by the wild tales of murders and supernatural appearances which the old man related as indisputable facts. She looked after him now with a fearful curiosity in her face. Lady Carleton observed it, and putting her arm round the girl she drew her gently towards her.

"Well, Maggie, so they tell queer tales of old Cuthbert, do they? That is something new to me. You used to say that he told queer tales himself. What queer tales have you heard of him, and who are *they*? Do you understand the meaning of '*les on dits ne sont jamais vrais*?' "

Margaret's large eyes glanced up affectionately at the pale, beautiful face that bent over her.

“ Dear Lady Carleton ! I have not been gossiping with the servants or the villagers. Indeed I have not. But I could not help hearing what Miss Price and mamma and papa were saying one day, when I was in the room, about old Cuthbert. He has strange dreams, and can foretel future events, and knows a great many secrets of the earl’s family and the castle.”

Lady Carleton kissed her god-daughter’s fair forehead, and smiled at her excitement.

“ That Cuthbert has strange dreams, I can believe ; for he smokes a great deal of tobacco, and eats opium ; and that he knows more than most of our people about the Raby family, I can believe too, for he is nearly seventy years old, and came here from North Ashurst before he was fifteen, and was afterwards a confidential servant of the late earl ; but that he has any extraordinary power in predicting future events, I cannot believe. You must have been mistaken in thinking that your papa and mamma and Miss Price believed *that* either, although they may have repeated some of the absurd reports on the subject which the uneducated believe. You are too prone to credit the marvellous stories

you hear, my darling. Perhaps you believe that the old countess, as they call her, walks along this terrace by night, clad in boy's clothes—as she is reported to have tried to escape from her cruel husband in that disguise?"

"Yes," said Maggie; "and they say that she might have got away very easily, but that she waited for her baby, that the nurse was to give her through one of those very windows. They say she waited and waited, and walked up and down this terrace from sunset almost to sunrise, stopping at the windows, and trying to peep in to see if the nurse was coming. She was dreadfully afraid lest her husband, the *wicked lord*, should find out that she had got out of the castle. At last she knocked gently at a window—one of these—I don't know which one—and called, 'Betty! Betty!' very softly, thinking the nurse (who is Mrs. Fenton now) would hear her. The window was opened gently, and Mrs. Fenton's voice said to her, 'Stop a moment, my lady.' The poor countess tried to see her baby in the dim light, and looked in at the window, dressed as she was in boy's clothes; and just then there came a blaze of light, and she saw her

husband's face grinning at her. So she flew away down these steps into the garden there, to hide herself among the bushes, in the dark, in hopes to escape into the park before it was light. But the wicked lord had out ever-so-many dogs and men, and hunted the poor countess—actually hunted her!—and caught her, and brought her back again; and after that he treated her more cruelly than before. Don't you think *that* story is true?" asked the indignant girl, with tearful eyes.

"I am afraid it is substantially true, my dear," said Lady Carleton, sharing her emotion; "but I cannot believe that the spirit of the poor lady, in her strange disguise, haunts this terrace in the summer nights, as the Carleton villagers say she does."

"Oh!" said Maggie, recovering herself a little, "*I* do not believe *that*, of course! Don't you think the last earl must have been mad? Nobody could do some of the things he did, who was in his right mind."

Lady Carleton leaned against the old stone griffin as if she was tired; but she did not reply. Her young companion went on.

"They say he once tried to strangle his

son—dear Lord Carleton ! Old Cuthbert says he never meant to do it. He only did it to torment his wife. He had tied her in a chair, and made her look while he did it. Don't you think that was almost as wicked as if he had really meant to murder him ? I do so hate that wicked lord !” said Maggie, and her eyes flashed through her tears. “He ought to have been hanged—or *beheaded*, I suppose, as he was a nobleman. But hanging is too good for him.”

“What, Maggie ! would you hang him if he were mad ?”

Margaret paused.

“No !—oh, no ! But I would have him shut up so that he could do no harm to any one. I can't think how any lady could marry him. See !—there, old Cuthbert is opening a window ! I wonder whether that is the one the old countess tapped at !—He knows ; for he was with the earl that night, and helped to catch her and bring her back. He was a great favourite with the wicked lord, and that's no credit to him.”

“I am afraid we don't know enough of those bygone days to judge him fairly,” said

her ladyship, approaching the open window. "I do not think Cuthbert is a bad man."

"I am sorry to have kept you waiting, my lady!" said the object of her remark when he had forced up the sash. "But the locks are all gone rusty, and I had much ado to get the old keys to turn in them. Wait a bit, Miss Margaret! and I'll just pull away some of these climbing plants, and then ye can step into the room."

He did so; and Lady Carleton entered the apartment. It was long, and somewhat narrow. Besides the window by which they had entered, there were five other windows all looking on the terrace. The walls were hung with tapestry;—but there were many blank spaces showing where large pictures had been. The floor was of oak, which had once been polished; and the ceiling of the same material was vaulted, and tastefully carved; though not very elaborately. At either end of the room was a yawning chimney, the mantelpieces of which were of oak, boldly carved over with a huge escutcheon of the Raby family.—It had no furniture except some uncouth chairs of black oak, with tapestry seats.

Lady Carleton glanced over the apartment rapidly. "What is this room?" she asked.

"The south dining-hall, my lady. These doors open into the corridor;" and he threw open one.

Lady Carleton, closely followed by Maggie, stepped into the corridor. It was broad, silent, gloomy; the light came through painted-glass windows; Maggie counted eleven of them, but she could not see to count the whole length of that ample passage.

"Those windows look into the inner quadrangle, of course?"

"They do, my lady."

"Let us go back into that great room," said Maggie. "This corridor is so long and gloomy."

"It's the same length, I fancy, as the one above, which you admire so much," said the countess, putting her arm round Maggie.

"But that leads to *your* apartments," said the young girl, "and this leads to all sorts of unknown and uninhabited rooms. It frightens me."

"What do you think of this long room for Arundel's theatre?" asked Lady Carleton.

"I do not think it will do very well. It's

not cheerful.—There must be more rooms ! Where does that door lead ?” asked Maggie. Old Cuthbert did not seem to hear.

“ Where does that door lead ?” repeated Lady Carleton.

“ Only into another of the old rooms, my lady.”

“ I should like to see it.”

“ Very good, my lady ;” and he began to fumble among a bunch of keys.

“ Will they not want more than one room if they act a play ?” said Maggie.

“ Yes. I suppose they will want several. But the first thing for us to settle is whether there is one of the unused rooms that will do for a theatre,” said Lady Carleton.

“ Oh, I do so long to see a play acted ! Did not Arundel write word that there was one of the rooms he thought would do ?”

“ Yes,” replied the countess. “ He says he remembers going into these rooms with his father, when he was a very little child ; and that there was a great recess with a door in one room. That room he says he recollects perfectly, because his father remained in it for some time ;—and he thinks it would make

a capital theatre. That's the room we are to look at most particularly."

"How long Cuthbert is!" exclaimed the impatient girl. "It's getting dusk; and we shan't be able to see the rooms well, at all. Do tell him to be quick. I'm sure I could find the key. May I?"

At that moment old Cuthbert threw open the door, with a jerk; and Maggie sprang forward. "Oh! it's all dark;" and she retreated to Lady Carleton's side again.

"What room is that, Mr. Fenton?"

"The marble saloon, my lady. We used to call it the vine-room, too; you'll see *why* when I've opened some of the shutters." And he disappeared within the dark room, on the threshold of which the countess and Margaret stood in silent expectation.

"Had you not better get a light, Mr. Fenton? You may stumble over something, and hurt yourself."

"No, thank you, my lady. I know my way blindfold here," replied a voice in the darkness, which sounded so unlike the old man's, in Maggie's ear, that she wound her arm round Lady Carleton's waist, and tried

to say something to assure herself that this unwonted sensation was not fear.

She uttered a little laugh. "This is quite romantic! I wish Lord Merle and Arundel were here! They would like it."

"*You* don't quite like it, Maggie!" said the countess, smiling. "You are pale. Would you like to go back and wait for me on the terrace?"

"Oh! no, no!" whispered Maggie; she felt as if she could not speak loud. "Don't send me away! I am not afraid! I never am afraid; only it feels strange, and I am rather cold."—She shivered, and laughed, and clung closer to the countess. "There! he has got a shutter open.—Oh! how very, very beautiful!"

The marble saloon must have looked somewhat like a fairy vision to eyes that had been straining themselves in mere darkness for some minutes, when a flood of many-coloured light was suddenly let in athwart its singular beauty. Each fold of the huge shutters, as it was removed from that lofty gothic window, revealed fresh beauties, and Lady Carleton stood in mute astonishment in the centre of the apartment. The window at first attracted

attention. It was a very fine specimen of Italian painting. The picture in the centre was a copy of Titian's celebrated "Bacchus and Ariadne," and all the surrounding portions of glass represented Italian vintage scenes in medallions of various shapes and sizes, so arranged as to form a setting of gems to the central piece. The brilliant colouring was reflected on floor, walls, and ceiling; which were themselves as valuable works of art as the pictures that intercepted the common light of day.

"What a beautiful window!" whispered Maggie. "It is like — Cathedral."

"Can you open the window, Mr. Fenton?" said the countess. "The room wants airing; and I should like to look at this carving in clear daylight. The colours are confusing."

The window was easily opened; and, in the mellow evening light, Lady Carleton began to examine one of the finest rooms she had ever seen. It was all of marble, richly carved in every part, except the floor, and that was of the very finest mosaic work. The walls and ceiling were perfect marvels of the chisel. They seemed to be entirely overgrown with the thickest vines, trained over pillars and

arches of variegated marble. The vines themselves—stems, leaves, heavy dropping clusters of dusky purple grapes—were all carved out of marble in basso, mezzo, and alto-relievo, according to the requirements of perspective. Verde Antico—Verde di Corsica—the beautiful Mona marble, and that found at Kolmerden, in Sweden, had all been used by the daring artist in executing his design, and with perfect success. There was a trellis-work of twisted vine branches spread over the ceiling, from which hung the most exquisite wreaths of festoons of the vine—they seemed to be actually waving in the air; here and there a heavy cluster of grapes had apparently dragged a bough from its place halfway down into the apartment, where it hung in autumnal luxuriance for ever. The more nearly the walls were examined the more admirable seemed the skill and fidelity of the artist. Lady Carleton's curiosity rose at every step she took. There was something here and there which seemed familiar to her. "Surely, the colour of those grapes is not natural to the marble!—I never saw marble of that colour!" she said, half to herself.

"It is the natural colour, my lady. It is

the Anglesea marble, that is dark purple. It's all natural marble. There's not a stroke of paint about the whole carving—I'm sure of that; for I saw it all being done."

"You?—How long ago was it done?"

"About fifty years ago since it was all put up here. But the artist was ten years carving it. He was a real genius, my lady! He designed the room for my lord's mother."

"He was a genius indeed if he designed and executed these walls and that ceiling. What was his name?"

"He was a Frenchman. His name was *De Merville*. The countess knew him in Rome before she married the earl. After she was married he came here, and was ten years planning and carving this room."

"A noble work! *De Merville*!—What became of him?" asked the countess, with increased curiosity.

Old Cuthbert glanced towards Margaret. She was at a distant part of the room, feeling the grapes and leaves on the wall, to make herself quite sure they were not real. He dropped his voice lower, and advancing a step, replied, "It is a sad story, my lady. The earl became jealous of the poor gentle-

man, and was determined to be revenged. My lady was as innocent as Miss Margaret yonder; but he kept her shut up in this room and the next for years and years, till she died of a broken heart. And he contrived to have M. de Merville shut up in a French dungeon—they call a *lettre de cachet*. They say he lost his senses there, when he heard of the bad things the earl did to his family. But, maybe, you know all about *that*; for the present lord got him set at liberty, and was very kind to his family."

"Yes. I have heard something about it," replied the countess, concealing her surprise. "Did M. de Merville design the tables, cabinets, and sofas here?" They were all in perfect keeping with the walls, and of extraordinary beauty.

"Yes, my lady. He designed them all. I am proud to say I helped him in some of the rougher work. I carved the twisted vine-roots for the pedestal of that table—and I carved all the leaves on the back of that chair. The poor countess used to come and watch him at work in his studio. She had little else to amuse her, poor lady!"

"Where was his studio?" inquired Lady

Carleton, feeling a strange interest in this unexpected revelation concerning the old man, whose fondness for carving grapes in his dotage she had often laughed at.

"He used the next room, the oak-parlour, as a studio. It was my lady's bedroom afterwards." The old man's face grew dark, as if a black cloud of memory had suddenly obscured it.

"Has the oak-parlour a large recess in it?" inquired the countess.

Old Cuthbert seemed to hear nothing.

The countess spoke louder. "You may open the door into the next room, now."

"To-night, my lady? You will not be able to see the carving. Excuse me, but your ladyship had better wait till the morning."

"No. I wish to look into it to-night. I think *that* is the room I am in search of. If it be, I will trouble you no more this evening, as you seem indisposed to go into the rooms after sunset. I thought, Mr. Fenton, you had no superstition!" she added, smiling.

"Ah! it's not that, my lady! I'm not a coward!" And he began fitting keys into the lock. "If you had seen the unhappiness that I have seen in these rooms, you would

not be very fond of going into them—especially at dusk. And on this unlucky day of all days in the year!”

“Why not on this day?”

“It was on the — of — that the poor countess tried to escape from her husband. I’ll never forget that night, if I live to be a hundred years old!”

“Oh! please don’t talk of that now, Cuthbert!—It is such a dreadful story!” said Margaret. “Let me help you with the keys. There, that’s it!” The key turned easily in the lock;—the door was thrown open, and my aunt’s parlour was before them.

“You can come in, my lady. These shutters have holes in them, and so the room is not quite dark. I will let in more light in a moment; but it is too late to see the carving. It’s all oak; and as poor M. de Merville used to say, ‘There’s no better carving to be found in Holland or in Italy.’ It would amuse you for hours, Miss Margaret, to come and make out the odd things there are here. Serpents with wings—mermaids—cherubs—lions with men’s heads—monkeys—flowers, with little naked boys asleep in them—dolphins, with flying cupids riding them like mad—grinning

faces of devils, and sweet young angel faces, and many things more than I can say."

"There's *the recess!*" exclaimed Margaret.

"Ah! yes. That recess was my lady's oratory!"—said old Cuthbert, speaking quickly. "She was a Catholic, you know. That used to be fitted up like a small chapel, with a beautiful altar, and a gold crucifix, and flowers, and wax tapers. The late earl had all the things thrown away when she died. It was just as bare as it is now when my lord took possession of the castle."

"But he did not throw away the gold crucifix, Cuthbert?" said Margaret. "The wicked lord was very fond of gold. He never threw money away, in all his fits of passion, they say. If *he* did not keep the gold crucifix, somebody else did—don't you think so?" And she looked curiously into his face.

"I can't say anything, one way or the other, miss. All I know is, that when the present lord came to look at these rooms, when he took possession of the castle, the oratory was all empty—just as you see it now. Perhaps I had better go and fetch some lights, my lady."

"I think you had.—Stay!—Is that the

reflexion from a painted window in the oratory ?”

“ Yes, my lady. If you will just step into it you will see. It is a beautiful round window. I will go and fetch lights.”

He retired ;—and Lady Carleton seated herself on one of the high-backed chairs to rest while she looked round the room. Maggie stood beside her ; and as her young eyes pierced the gathering gloom and spied out all sorts of grotesque and beautiful devices on the walls and ceiling, she little thought of the days in store for her. She little thought that this room, into which she had come as if by accident, that evening, was to be the scene of nearly all the great events of her life. She had no prevision of the days—the years—that were to be spent by her in the solitude of the oak-parlour. Her young spirit had, before this, glanced, eager-eyed, into the future, but could not penetrate the golden mists of hope that curtained all. Ah ! could she have seen the multitudinous hours thronging the space in that empty room—waiting each its time to bring her joy or pain, she would not have seen anything else there !—People of sensitive and imaginative constitutions often have a

presentiment that this or that person or place, seen for the first time, will strongly affect their future lives for good or ill ; nor is this difficult to account for. It seems far more difficult to account for the perfect indifference with which we often look on persons and places for the first time, that, subsequently, become dearer than the life-blood in the veins, or more hateful than the cause of all sin and sorrow within us. Our eyes look carelessly at other eyes that will one day be as load-stars to ours. How is it that their glance is negative, *now* ? That we are as impassive as wood while their gaze is on us ? We listen, *now*, unmoved to a voice ; as the deaf adder, we hear not the charm thereof ;—a year hence, and there shall be no tone of that voice that shall not make our heart-strings vibrate in responsive harmony, or jar them in harshest discord. We go to a place for the first time—we see nothing particular in it ; we came there by the merest chance in the world—it makes no impression. We go to it again,—and, behold ! what a significance it has acquired ! What a magnitude it has *now* !—It is all the world to us—all the world do I say ? it is infinitude ! It fills all space, it blots out

all the starry universe ; that little spot of earth is all we know between us and the eternal God ! It is fair as Tempe, it is horrible as Tartarus !—Then we wonder that it was not dear—or that it was not odious, before.

Instead of seeing anything marvellous in instant sympathies and antipathies—in love or hate, at first sight, I confess to marvelling much more at the strange unimpressible state of mind in which we are at the very time when something is happening which should affect us deeply. Only when the time is past, when it is all over, we say, “ If I had but known ! ” Truly does “ man walk in a vain shadow, and disquiet himself in vain ; ” vainly he disquiets himself for a good or an evil that he expects, and that comes not ; and for the great events of life—he foresees not their coming — does not even see that they are darkening his present path.

Thus it was that young Margaret Hastings stood for the first time in the oak-parlour at Carleton Castle, and never once thought of herself in connexion with it. Indeed, she did not think much about the room, except as regarded its capabilities for being used as a theatre by the boys. Its rich fantastic carv-

ing and its handsome bow-window were carelessly looked at. She glanced once at the prospect which the latter presented when Lady Carleton directed her attention to it. But girls of thirteen seldom care for a fine landscape; and all that Margaret saw through the window was the amber light of the western sky, blending with the clear blue of the zenith,—and midway in the beautiful concave, the full moon, hanging over the neglected garden below the terrace. She thought, as she looked, of the poor lady hiding there on such a night; and waiting hour after hour till the nurse could escape to her with the children. She wondered whether the window through which she then looked was the one at which the countess tapped at last, and where she was met, face to face, by her cruel husband. There was something in the story of the late countess's sufferings which was exquisitely painful to Margaret. She thought, perhaps, *this* was the very window, and she turned away from it.—Lady Carleton was looking over a letter, and said to her,

“Now, Maggie, I will read you the rest of Arundel's letter. I could not read it before Miss Price and Reginald, as they are two of

the persons whom he wishes to surprise with his play. Let me see ! I read all that about the new music he has got—‘Mozart,’ ‘Requiem,’ ‘Sing it together.’ Ah ! we shall see about that—humph—‘Rousseau !’—humph—Oh ! this is what he says about the play. After telling me that I am to come and look at these rooms, and see if there is one that will suit his purpose, he goes on—

“ ‘If the room I think of will do, have all the packages I send taken into it unknown to papa I know you tell papa everything, but you must not tell him that there is anything going on in those old rooms. It will spoil all if you do.—Frank is such a splendid actor. I want you and papa to see him in perfection. I don’t believe Roscius was up to him ; and John Kemble cannot play Romeo as Frank can,—though he is the fashion. I don’t like him ;—he’s a great deal too stiff—not a bit like an Italian lover ! We used to see those fellows figuring away in the moonlight. They did their business in a very different style from Mr. Kemble. I dare say you think—[and here the countess read on awhile to herself, not deeming all that her son had written quite suited to Maggie’s age.

That young lady looked about, meanwhile, among the strange carvings, and out through the window, during these judicious suppressions—which I may as well give the reader, as the whole letter is characteristic of Arundel at fifteen]—*bellissima madre mia*, that Frank and I were too young to understand what love-making meant then ; but you forget that we associated with all classes of people ; and we went to the *churches* every day, and the *opera* almost every night. Again, sweet mother mine, I dare say you think that school-boys can't know very much about love-making. My darling innocent mother ! We boys at Eton call ourselves men. Thanks to François and James Hastings, Frank and I have learned that to be *manly* as some of these fellows are, is the height of stupidity. Don't fear for us. I have told you before that we see and converse with boys that we know to be guilty of all sorts of immorality and folly ; we are obliged to do this. I do not say that Frank and I have never done things here that we should not like you to know. We have got into scrapes often enough ; I'm in debt now, and have got a bothering letter to write to my father about it—asking for money and for-

givenness, and all that.—I never can make my allowance do. I want lots of things Frank don't care for. He is very good about money matters, and has a head for business. But I am really more *rangé* than he is. I'm obliged to be, or I could do no work. I can safely say we have neither of us done anything that *you* even, my sweet mother, would not pardon us for, and kiss us afterwards.

“‘I am reading Milton's prose works, now (making some comparisons of my own—probably all wrong—between him and Demosthenes), and I came upon these passages, which may help you to bear the idea of our going (as we so soon shall go) out of this little wicked world of school, into that big one where my father and the rest of the great guns are firing cannonades every day. The Puritan-poet says, and mark the music of his speech, even in prose (what an ear and touch for the organ he must have had!)—“He that can apprehend and consider vice, with all her baits and seeming pleasures, and yet abstain, and yet distinguish, and yet prefer that which is truly better, he is the true wayfaring Christian. I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies

out and sees her adversary. — That virtue, therefore, which is but a youngling in the contemplation of evil, and knows not the utmost that vice promises to her followers, and regrets it, is but a blank virtue, not a pure.”

“ ‘ After this, I think I may safely tell you that we are obliged to go this evening to a *wine* party, given expressly in my honour, where I know most of the fellows will get drunk, and where I know *three* that will not. I am very much indisposed to go. I have had a terribly depressing headache ever since the examinations, and yesterday I felt so stupid that I really did not know what I was about. To-day I am a little better. François has given me some strong coffee, and I am able to sit up and write to you. That is the easiest pleasure I can get at. I will see Dr. Ward before we go down to join you at Carleton.

“ ‘ The play we have fixed on is “Romeo and Juliet.” Frank is the Romeo, of course. Now, I want to be Mercutio, and to have Sophia Hastings for the Juliet. Maggie is a great deal too young, and has no more idea of being in love than this pen. But James Hastings says his father will object to Sophia’s acting,

and that *I* must be Juliet, and he will be Mercutio. I got into a rage when they told me I should *look* Juliet very well. They tease diabolically. Try and talk the rector over. Sophia is so pretty;—and I have a notion that she would not object to act Juliet to Frank's Romeo.'

"Now, Maggie, you may listen again."

"Yes!—But—did you hear a noise just now?"

"Yes; I think something drove into the front court.—Where was I?—It is getting quite dark; I can scarcely see.—Oh! 'Romeo. As it is to be a strictly private performance, in our own house, there cannot even be the ghost of——' "

Maggie here uttered a gasping sound, and flung herself, trembling and pale, into Lady Carleton's arms.

"What is it, my dear?" exclaimed the latter, half frightened herself, rising, and looking round the gloomy apartment. "Did you see anything?—Where?—What was it?" Maggie could not speak for a moment; she pointed towards the window; but without looking that way.

"Did you see some one at the window, my darling? It must have been one of the servants."

"Oh, no!" said Maggie, distinctly; keeping her face still buried on the countess's bosom.

"Who was it, then?—Do you know?—Speak, Maggie!—This is foolish."

Maggie looked up and tried to speak.

"I heard a tapping on the window. Some one—dressed like a boy—with a beautiful face—but, oh! so pale and mournful!—looked in.—*There!* just at that corner. I saw it *twice*.—Indeed, indeed I did!" said the trembling girl, getting courage as she spoke.

"You must have been deceived, my darling.—You are over-excited; these old rooms and the thoughts about the poor countess and her escape have conspired to make my Maggie a coward. Come closer to the window, dear! We will open it wider, and you shall see that what you have mistaken for a human figure is nothing but a branch of ivy waving in the breeze."

Lady Carleton soothed and supported poor Maggie, who did not seem to be convinced of

the truth of the explanation. Still she allowed herself to be led to the window, and looked at the great waving branch which the countess pointed out.

“Do you see now, Maggie, how easy it is for our senses to deceive us? When I was a girl of your age, I was once much frightened by seeing——”

Margaret grasped her arm convulsively.

“There!—There!—Look!—It is there again! Ah!”

Lady Carleton saw the object of Margaret’s terror then.

A tall youth was looking in at the window; stealthily peering from behind one of the heavy mullions. The countenance was, indeed, beautiful; but pallid, and utterly devoid of expression—except that of fixed dejection.

Blank, meaningless, frightfully changed as it was, Lady Carleton needed not a second glance at that face to comprehend the whole truth.

“Merciful God!” she murmured, as the large vacant eyes stared in on her again. “He does not know me!”—And stretching her arms eagerly towards the retreating figure, she cried

out in a tremulous voice: "Arundel! my child! Arundel!"

Still the boy retreated; and she saw him run hurriedly down the steps into the dark garden. The wretched mother stood gazing into the evening gloom. She passed her hand over her eyes to be assured that she was not dreaming. Margaret was there beside her.

"Did *you* see him go down those steps, Maggie?" she asked in a faint voice.

"Yes. Was it, indeed, Arundel? I thought I had seen the face before. What is the matter with him? How strange he looked; and he did not come when you called."

At this moment old Cuthbert came hurriedly into the room—but without the lights.—"Oh, my lady!—Such a surprise!—My lord drove up to the hall-door, just now, in a post-chaise. I think he is coming *here*."

"Yes.—That is his step.—You may go, Cuthbert.—Maggie," she whispered, softly, "are you afraid to go into that garden and see if you can find Arundel, and bring him here?"

"Afraid! Oh, no! not afraid of Arundel!"

I thought it was something else. I will bring him back, dear Lady Carleton."—And the blood returned to Maggie's cheek, and courage to her heart, as she sprang out on to the terrace, leaving Lady Carleton standing in expectation of her husband's entrance.

CHAPTER IV.

THE END OF A HAPPY DAY.

"No bliss so great but runneth to an end,
No hap so hard but may in time amend."

SOUTHWELL.

"The fining-pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold, but the
Lord trieth the hearts."
Proverbs.

HE came in slowly, with an uncertain step. It was almost dark, but she saw him distinctly. There is always light enough to see those we love. He paused, and looked round the desolate apartment. She remembered that this had been his mother's room, and that all those sad events of his childhood which he had once confided to her had taken place here. She did not wonder that a throng of sorrowful memories had arrested him on the threshold; beating back for a moment the new sorrow which she felt, full surely, he had

come to impart to her. She knew the worst now. She had *seen* her boy—her idiot boy! She had tried to anticipate it; for had not Dr. Ward and other physicians told her that this evil might befall them? She thought she had prepared her mind for it. But she learned now that no amount of preparation will blunt the edge of grief when it pierces the loving heart. “Alas! in every sorrow there is something *new*!” She stood still, and watched Lord Carleton. There was a vague sort of sympathetic understanding in her mind.

“Ah! yes! He is thinking of the old by-gone days!—of his unhappy mother! He has forgotten his child for the moment!—*Why* did I come into these rooms *to-night*?”—Presently she felt that her husband was at her side; that he had taken her hand.

“Are you alone, Caroline?” he asked, glancing once more round the gloomy apartment. She bowed her head; for no words would come.

“Why are you silent?”—He folded her in his arms, and kissed her forehead. He was surprised at this reception; he had prepared himself for joyful congratulations which he should have to turn into sadness. He had

tasted the bitterness of his lot, in anticipation, as he drove down from London. But there was no smile for him—no word of joy for his success !

“How is this, my love? I expected to find you gay. You had the newspapers and my letter this morning? Is there anything the matter *here*? The servants told me, just now, that you were well, better than usual, indeed. What is it?”—And with a gentle hand he turned her face upwards, that he might read its expression. The action was lover-like, and so were the two kisses which descended on the drooping lids that would not raise themselves, lest he should see the tears beneath. But the mother heeded not, scarcely felt the caresses of her husband. The face of her once gifted boy seemed to be still looking at her through the window.

“Trembling, and in tears, Caroline! What is this grief? I, too, had a grief to tell; but let me hear yours first.”

“I know all!” she murmured. “Arundel, my darling!”—And burying her face in his bosom, she wept silently, but with such convulsive tremor as threatened to shatter her frail body. Lord Carleton was overcome with

sympathy, and could find no words of consolation. He held her tightly folded to his heart, and waited till the passionate grief should subside a little.

Banquets, balls, public meetings of various kinds were at that moment going on all over the kingdom, in honour of the new minister, from whom much was expected. His health and happiness and honour were the theme of many a toast and speech. Throughout the length and breadth of the land he was applauded, admired, and envied. He had gained a position in the eyes of the world which the world thought worth having. And the world cried vehemently, "What a fortunate man! Long live the Earl of Carleton!"—The world could not know that its *vivats* had no power to gladden his heart; that, even on the day of his triumph, they were overpowered by a sound of lamentation and woe within the sacred circle of his home.

When she was somewhat calmer, he said in a quiet tone,

"How did you know this?"

"I have seen him."

"Impossible! I left him in London ten hours ago."

"I have seen him. Not ten minutes since

he stared at me through that window, a witless creature. My sweet Arundel! my beautiful son! That had not his like in the whole world! Oh! my stricken, idiot boy!"—She covered her face with her hands.

"This is some delusion. Why are you in these old rooms? They are full of melancholy, and disturb the brain. You cannot have *seen* poor Arundel. It is impossible! I came to tell you—to prepare you for seeing him tomorrow. He is in St. James's-square with François;—your presentiment is right—he has lost his reason."

"I know it. It is no presentiment. Tell me——"

At this moment old Cuthbert came in with lights. After placing them on a table he stopped a moment, and then said, as if he knew the interruption would not be welcome, though it *must* be made, "My lord, Bennett wishes to know if you can speak with him for a few minutes, immediately. He has something of importance to say. He is waiting in the next room."

"I will come."—Then turning to the countess, he said, "Do not leave the room. I have much to say to you, and but little time

to say it in. I will be back in a few minutes." He led her to a seat, and left her.

As soon as he was gone she dragged herself to the window, and leaning against one of the mullions, looked out along the moonlit terrace for Margaret and her boy. The recollection of that face made her shudder. Suddenly the thought came across her—"Shall I have to get used to that? Must I bear that face through all the coming years of his life—with the recollection of what he was? But lately he had an intellect beyond all his associates, and now he is cast down to a level with the veriest idiot that serves as sport for the unthinking vulgar. Oh, Arundel! come! come to your mother's heart, and let her love warm you into intelligence again!—It can! It shall!" She paused, and pressing her hands over her bosom, whispered softly—"No, no! Oh, no! Not *that* way is there peace or salvation for him! Oh! thou faithless, passionate heart! Is there not a good and mighty God who ordereth all things in heaven and earth? Doth he afflict thee for his pleasure, or for thy profit? Teach me to love Thy will, oh Lord! Do with my child even as Thou wilt. Be merciful unto me, oh Lord! for I am in trouble."

The earl returned after a few minutes' absence. "You are right, I have no doubt, my love!" he said, joining her at the window. "You may have seen our poor child. They are searching for him now. I find that he escaped from the house before we left London. He got up at the back of the chaise unperceived by Bennett. With the cunning which so often accompanies this disorder, he contrived to keep out of sight whenever we stopped to change horses. This journey will probably do him no harm, but rather help to tranquillise his nervous system, which has been overwrought lately by intense application to studies of a kind very unsuited to his age, and to which it seems no one thought he was addicted. François has been negligent, I think. He is full of self-reproach, however; and I confess I myself should not have suspected a boy like Arundel (who was working for prizes at school, too) of perplexing his brain with all the wild political and social errors of Rousseau and the French encyclopedists. It seems that modern democracy and ultra views on all social subjects have been seething in that poor child's head for the last six months. It is no wonder he has

lost his reason!—It is to be hoped that, when he recovers, all these absurdities will be swept away from his mind.—It is now three days since the malady showed itself distinctly.”

“ I had a letter from him three days since,” sighed the poor mother.

“ Does he show any signs of mental disorder in it ?”

“ No ; but complains of various physical ailments which precede his disorder. How long does Dr. Ward think this attack will last ?” she asked, scarcely daring to look at her husband.

“ Several months.—But—Caroline—if he be not cured within a year——”

She cast down her eyes, and made no reply. She knew too well the dreadful alternative. Lord Carleton embraced her tenderly, and told all that he knew, and more that he had reason to hope, in favour of Arundel’s recovery in the course of a few months. “ In that case, Dr. Ward believes that this temporary obscuration, or rather *inaction*, of the intellectual faculties will have been of the greatest benefit to his after life. He has no doubt that his brain will be much strengthened by it ; in short, that this is merely a prolonged

sleep of the mind which Nature has prescribed after the unnatural exertions to which it has been subjected. Arundel is but a boy; but there are some grown men among us whom these mad French *philosophes* are making as insane as themselves. I cannot control them as I can my poor child, nor can I hope for their recovery as I do confidently for his.—Now I must leave you, love, for a short time to look for him.—Bennett says he saw him run from the back of the carriage towards this old garden, as we drove up the avenue.”

“You need not go, Frederick. See! there they come!”—said Lady Carleton, pointing out on the terrace.

“Who is that with him?”

“Little Maggie Hastings. I sent her to find him. How slowly he moves!—Perhaps he has hurt himself!”—And she was about to run out to meet them.

Her husband laid his hand on her arm. “Stay where you are!—He has an aversion to entering a house. She is leading him forward with difficulty. If we show ourselves he will fear that we are going to take him prisoner—he will escape from her

once more, and we may not find him all night.—Stand back!—out of sight, till they are fairly in the room. I will then fasten the windows.”

“Does he recognise no one?” asked the mother, with all a mother’s pity in her accents.

“No one. Hark! he is singing. The only thing in which his intelligence is as clear as ever is music. All yesterday he roamed about the house with the score of Mozart’s ‘Requiem’ in his hand. His voice is not changed.”

“Hark! Yes. It is a passage from the ‘Requiem’ he is singing now,” said his mother, pressing forward.

“Stand back! out of the light. Don’t let him see you, Caroline!” he whispered. “Let the girl push back the window.—If we startle him, he will be away in a moment.”

Lady Carleton sat down on a low couch that stood in the shadow, and her husband placed himself beside her, while Margaret led her captive up to the window. He stopped before it and looked in, with a childish curiosity in his face. Margaret held him by the hand, and tried to coax him in.

"Come and see what a pretty place it is," she said, advancing a step through the open window, and pointing to the carved figures on the walls.

He stared vacantly at her. "Arundel can't come in," he said, quickly.

"Why not?" asked Maggie, cheerfully; but Lady Carleton saw by the flickering candle-light that she was as white as her frock.

"It hurts Arundel *here*." And he laid his hand on the top of his head.

"It won't hurt you for a minute. Come and look at these beautiful things! And I will sing to you," said Margaret.

"Sing!" he repeated, as if pondering the meaning of the word. At this moment his mother controlled her heart firmly, and commenced singing the same portion of Mozart's "Requiem" which she had heard him sing just before. Her voice resounded with preternatural sweetness through the deserted room. Lord Carleton stood rooted to the spot, and Maggie's tears flowed down her cheeks while they both watched the effect of the music upon Arundel. At the first sound he turned his eyes to the quarter from whence it arose; but he saw no one. As the

air proceeded, it seemed to attract him just as the music of the Hindoo's flute attracts the serpent. He stepped through the window—his form was drawn up fully (it had been dejected and slouching before)—his eyes brightened, and there was an expression of delight in his face. He held up his forefinger to Margaret as a signal that she should not interrupt the singing. Presently he joined in it, and at every bar advanced further into the room, with his beautiful eyes fixed on the point from which the voice that enchanted him seemed to come. At length he saw his mother. He gazed on her with a smile, but it was not one of recognition.

“Go on, if you can!” whispered Lord Carleton. “This will do him good.”

Lady Carleton continued the strain, and in a few moments her son was kneeling at her feet and looking up into her face. She could scarcely bear that look. There was no intelligence in it—no affection. It was all curiosity and childish delight. She took his hands (still continuing the singing)—they were cold as marble—and she pressed them to her bosom. In vain she tried to control her feelings. She could bear it no longer;—

but ceased suddenly, and clasping her child in her arms, shed a mingled torrent of tears and kisses on his head. The poor boy understood nothing; but an emotion like commiseration seemed to steal into his mind as he saw his mother's tears. He stroked her face gently with his hand, and looked perplexed.

"Why do you cry? Arundel don't cry! Who are you?"

"Your mother, my darling."

He shook his head. "No mother—Arundel has no mother! Do you love Arundel?"

Poor Lady Carleton fell on the boy's neck in a fainting fit.

The earl raised her in his arms, and laid her on the couch. The boy still knelt in the same place, and watched his father's movements with an unintelligent smile, that was shocking to see.—His long, dark hair, damp with the evening dew, hung in disorder round his head like a woman's. As he knelt, looking helpless and dejected, the attitude might be taken for that of despair, and Maggie's romantic imagination recurred again to the story of the old countess.

Lord Carleton, too, seemed struck by the

boy's attitude, and looked at him for some minutes in silence, and with a countenance full of emotion. There was memory as well as present grief at work in his heart ;—for he remembered but too well his beloved mother's appearance in her disguise on that fatal evening. He, a child, had seen her kneel, almost on that very spot, and receive a brutal blow in answer to her heart-broken supplication. He looked half wildly round the room as fancy pictured the events of that night, and his eye fell now on the figure of the young girl standing in an attitude strongly expressive of pity, mingled with reverence. There was something in her look which made him start.

“ Good God ! ” he said to himself ; “ how like Margaret when I first saw her ! Am I to be driven mad by likenesses and fancies ? ” He stared at her for some minutes, and then spoke in a somewhat severe tone.

“ You need not stay !—Lady Carleton is ill. Send some one with water immediately.”

Thus dismissed, Margaret left the room with a bursting heart.

“ It is very unkind of Lord Carleton to send me away so ! ” she thought to herself. “ As if *I* did not care for Lady Carleton and Arundel ! ”

Oh ! what has come to Arundel ? Poor Lady Carleton !"—And the indignant young spirit forgot its sense of injustice at the thought of the deep grief of those she loved. Margaret was too generous, even then, to spend much feeling upon herself. She hastened, as well as she could, through the unfamiliar rooms and the dark corridors, finding her way by instinct. At last she emerged into the great hall, which was lighted. Some men-servants were talking in a group near the door. She stepped towards them, and her young voice had lost its usual clearness as she said aloud :

" Lord Carleton desires that some water may be taken to her ladyship. She has fainted. Let some one fetch Mrs. Fenton, or Justine, immediately. I will tell Miss Price. Take the water as soon as possible !—Cuthbert, you know the way !—Lord and Lady Carleton are in the oak-parlour."

A general stir was created by this announcement, and the group dispersed. As Margaret was going more slowly than usual up the staircase, some one came after her. It was Bennett, Lord Carleton's man.

" Miss Margaret, do you know if anything has been seen of Mr. Arundel ?"

"He is with Lord and Lady Carleton."

"Oh! thank you, miss!" The man seemed much relieved, and ran down the stairs again. She proceeded up-stairs, musing painfully on the dreadful change that had come over Arundel. That he had lost his reason and knew no one, she felt, without understanding it thoroughly. How could she believe that her beautiful and accomplished friend—who was all she could imagine of intellectual power and brightness in a boy—was now no better than poor Jemmy Blake the village idiot, who sat all day in the sun, balancing a straw—and laughed merrily when he saw his father's funeral!

When she re-entered the countess's parlour she found her brother James sitting with Miss Price. She sprang into his arms, and burst into tears; she could not speak.

"Have you seen Arundel, darling?" he asked.

"Yes," she sobbed.

"Is he with his parents?"

"Yes—oh yes."

Miss Price rose and took a lamp. "Where did you leave Lady Carleton, my dear?"

Maggie then found words. "Don't be fright-

ened, dear Miss Price. Lady Carleton is ill. She has fainted. Lord Carleton is with her, and I have sent Mrs. Fenton and Justine."

"Very well, my dear!—Good night! James has come to take you home. Naldo went away some time since. Good night!—How pale she is! James, my dear, give her a glass of wine. Poor Maggie! I must go to Lady Carleton. I think you had better ring and order a carriage. . Good night!"

CHAPTER V.

THE DAWN OF ANOTHER DAY.

“ Not always fall of leaf, nor ever spring,
Not endless night, nor yet eternal day ;
The saddest birds a season find to sing,
The roughest storm a calm may soon allay.
Thus with succeeding turns God tempereth all,
That man may hope to rise and fear to fall.”

AN hour or two later that night, when the household at the castle were all gone to bed except the earl, who was still occupied in his library—reading letter after letter, and writing on the back of each the summary of the answer to be written in due form by his secretary on the morrow—he came across a letter which arrested his attention for a longer time than the others.—He looked at the address many times before he broke the seal. At last he tore it open, and an enclosure fell to the ground. He picked it up. It was addressed

to his wife. He laid it on the table, with a strange look of curiosity. His brows were knit, as he turned over the envelope again and again, and found no word within it addressed to himself. This letter seemed to put a sudden stop to the transaction of the public business before him. He opened no more letters, though there were many waiting their turn for inspection, but took up that little letter, and turned it over and over, and sat musing with it in his hand. He was surprised by the sound of some one opening the door, and hurriedly throwing down the letter (as if he had been caught in the act of opening it), he seized another and broke the seal, as his wife entered the room. She was wrapped in a dressing-gown, and looked comfortless and weary.

"May I come in?—I could not sleep. I knew you were up. My fire is out. I am cold, and could not bear to be alone.—I will not interrupt you. I will sit here,—out of sight, and warm myself till you have finished." She stooped, as she passed his chair, and kissed his cheek. She tried to cheer him by some trifling remark.

"What a weary world of letters to wade

through ! Surely I can help you ; at least, in *opening* them. What a graceful handwriting ! Surely *that* is not a man's !”

“ No. It is merely franked to me. The letter is for you ;” and he handed it to her.

“ I do not know the writing,” said the countess ; the sadness of her face giving place to a faint expression of curiosity. “ Do you know whose it is ?”

“ It is Miss Hastings’ hand,” the earl replied, writing, as he spoke, on the letter he had just opened.

“ Oh !” said the countess ; and seating herself (*not* out of sight) she slowly broke the seal and read as follows ;—her husband all the time was busily opening and endorsing letters.

“ DEAR LADY CARLETON,

“ I have just heard from Dr. Ward of your son’s affliction. I will not waste time by the expression of my sincere sympathy with your grief, but will at once do what he suggests I should do in this emergency. You have already heard from him and others that I have devoted much time to the study of mental derangement. Dr. Ward believes that in

many cases of temporary insanity, monomania, and idiocy, I exercise a favourable effect on his patients. He is somewhat puzzled about the treatment to be adopted for your son, and has consulted with me upon the subject. To confine him with strangers would prolong, if not confirm, his malady. To allow him to remain at large, in such an establishment as yours in London, or even at Carleton Castle, would be attended with much danger. A quiet, but not solitary, life is what he requires. He should not see strangers, but should be subject to continual surveillance of those who love him and know how to treat his disease. But he should not be suffered to feel any personal restraint, or be conscious of the surveillance. He should roam freely about the house, and be as much in the open air as possible. It is also necessary that he should reside near London, in order that Dr. Ward may see him frequently. All these things, and more to the same effect, will be said to you by the good doctor, when you meet. Knowing this, I cannot help hoping that you will be favourably inclined to a plan which has occurred to me, and which Dr. Ward entirely approves. I propose that you should

send Arundel to me during his illness, and I will spare no pains to second Dr. Ward's efforts for his recovery. My house at Brompton is within a convenient distance for you to visit him daily, and for the doctor to come as often as he wishes. It is also very quiet, retired, and healthy—in fact, just the sort of place for such a patient. Since my mother's death, I have more leisure than I well know how to dispose of, and it would be truly kind in you to let me employ some time and thought upon so interesting a patient as young Arundel Raby. Do not fear that it will occasion any inconvenience in my household to receive him. My servants have not enough to do, and I have several rooms which I do not use, so that I can easily accommodate your son and his attendants. If you and the Earl of Carleton should dislike the idea of my incurring additional expense on your son's account (which it is quite reasonable that you should), let me remove that difficulty by saying that I will receive any sum of money which you and Dr. Ward shall agree that I ought to receive, in consideration of the expense and trouble I incur.—I cannot scruple to do this, as, in that case, I shall ap-

appropriate the money to my poor pensioners in the — Asylum. I have briefly and somewhat awkwardly expressed my wish to be of service on this occasion. Will you think over it, and consult with Lord Carleton and Dr. Ward; but before you decide *against* me, I hope that you will drive down here and see what a quiet little nest I offer for your wounded bird, and let me say *viva voce* many more things than I can ever say in a letter. It is many years since I wrote one of this length.

“It is true, is it not, that Lord Carleton is our new — ? I congratulate the country—and you—and him. From all that I hear of Arundel’s case, there is every reason to hope for his speedy recovery. With kind compliments to Lord Carleton and yourself,

“I am, dear Lady Carleton,

“Yours very sincerely,

“MARGARET HASTINGS.”

When Lady Carleton had finished reading this letter she looked at her husband. He was quite absorbed in the perusal of a document of considerable length; she turned to the fire, and sat looking at it, with the open letter in her lap. Whenever Lord Carleton made

more than usual rustle among the papers, she turned her head, but he seemed to have forgotten her presence. She determined to wait till he had finished his business. Another hour passed away before the last packet of letters was tied up and placed in the travelling-box. When he had turned the key and put it in his pocket, he seemed for the first time to remember her.

"What! are you here yet? You ought to be in bed, my dear, after the excitement of this day, too. You saw Arundel asleep?"

"No. He was not asleep. Bennett sits up in his room to-night. I would not have him left. He must be very tired; indeed, he seems so—yet his eyes never closed all the time I was there.—I am so ignorant of the right method of treating him!"

"Of course you are, my love. Is that any reproach to you? We must see Dr. Ward immediately about it. He talked to me for a few moments; but I was waiting to go to his Majesty, and had no time then. I begged him to dine with us to-morrow in town, and then we can arrange all that is necessary. I have only two primary conditions to stipulate

in his treatment. He shall not be sent where there are other persons similarly afflicted; and he shall not be exposed to the remarks—perhaps, the foolish teasing, of servants and strangers in our own house. We shall have some difficulty in procuring a proper residence for him; but Dr. Ward may be able to assist us. I have a horror of the common run of people who offer to take charge of nervous or imbecile patients. They are generally mercenary, often cruel—they can rarely take a genuine hearty interest in the recovery of the patient. Good God! it makes my blood freeze to think of the thousand cruel slights and indignities that our poor boy might be subjected to at the hands of hirelings!—Money, that in this world is so powerful, often fails in cases such as these; for the more we pay to the mercenary guardians of an idiot, the more is it their interest to keep him in a state of idiocy.—I wonder whether Dr. Ward could be induced to receive him into his own house. But then he has no wife—no daughter—he must trust to servants—to the uneducated.—Stay—could we not do this? Take a house near London, in a quiet place—say at Chel-

sea or Kensington—and let Miss Price and François take charge of him there, under Dr. Ward's superintendence?"

"Why may not *I* take charge of him?" asked the mother, somewhat sharply.

"If you wish it. I had thought the task would be very painful to you; and it is, I know, thought best that such patients should not be with their nearest friends. From many causes they are better with strangers. Besides, Caroline, my new position will require you to take a more active part in the political and fashionable circles than you have done lately. The minister cannot well spare his wife from the Court.—Trust me, dear one, there is nothing very desperate in Arundel's case! I understand the subject well enough to know that he will be better away from his own family. We will ask Dr. Ward to suggest a plan."

"Has he not suggested one to you already?" asked the countess, significantly.

"I had scarcely a moment to see him. We had no time to talk of a plan. What do you mean?"

"Do you not know what is in this letter?" she asked, with a futile attempt at a smile.

"How should I know? It is not written outside."

"Read the contents then, and tell me what you think of them."

Lord Carleton sat down again and deliberately perused Miss Hastings' letter. His wife watched his face the whole time. She saw the flush which came over its usual pallor, and the bright light of the wearied eye, as he folded it in silence, and returned it to her. They both sat looking into the fire for some time.

"What do you think of that letter, Frederick?" asked the countess, laying her hand upon his, and speaking softly.

"What do *you* think of it?" he asked, suddenly looking round on her with his penetrating eyes.

She did not shrink from the look, but replied firmly, "I think it is a noble and a generous letter. I think Miss Hastings is unlike most women—better than most."

"And I *know* you are right!"—he said in a fervid tone, and took the little hand between his own and pressed it.

"I think we ought to accept the proposal with gratitude," she continued.

"That is, indeed, the only proper way of meeting a noble and generous proposal."

"I wish I could make some adequate return to Miss Hastings. But she is so much my superior, that it is out of my power."

"You can love her, Caroline."

"Nay, that would be presumptuous and audacious in so frivolous a being. I leave that to *you*;" and one of the old smiles, full of playful *malice*, lighted up her face.

It was a safe sally, though Lord Carleton frowned slightly. She rose, and winding her arm round his neck, looked with the same smile into his eyes.

"Come, you must not be angry because I am not a noble, generous, and magnanimous woman like *somebody*!"

"I should be sorry if you were like anybody but yourself."

"Well! that's a scrap of comfort!—But, seriously, Frederick, I honour you for having had sense enough to admire such a woman when you were a boy. It does you great credit, and I envy her."

He took her in his arms.

"You envy her? Why?"

"Because you will always remember her as

a noble, poetical, heroic sort of woman ; un-attainable, and, therefore, for ever fresh and fair to your memory."

" Granted—*et puis ?*"

" I would wish to be remembered *so*."

" Remembered ! Wait till the time of remembrance comes. I would rather see you, and hold you thus, and hear you utter generous praise of the generous, than *remember* you. Don't let us talk of remembering each other yet, love !"

" You have not told me what you think of Miss Hastings' letter ?" she said again.

" I think that there are many more heroic women in the world than the world gives itself credit for ; and that there is no better, nobler, more generous, more amiable, more charming woman than Caroline, Countess of Carleton. Let us talk over the letter on our road to town to-morrow, or, rather, to-day, for—— Look here !" and he advanced to the window, behind which a grey sky had been brightening for the last half hour, and drawing back the curtain, he quoted a description of early morning that had been a favourite with him ever since he had learned it from the lips of Margaret Hastings. It begins thus :

“Now the day begins to break,
And the light shoots like a streak
Of subtle fire. The wind blows cold,
While the morning doth unfold——”

Little they thought, as they stood together
looking over the wide park, that they should
never stand there together any more. Lady
Carleton left her princely home on the morrow
for the last time ! The last time !

“The very words are like a knell.”

CHAPTER VI.

LITTLE NALDO.

"'Tis for some advantage, on the whole, that nature acts in this manner."

M. ANTONINUS.

"For never wouldst thou have made anything if thou hadst hated it, oh Lord! thou lover of souls."

Son of Sirach.

To the younger Margaret Hastings, my aunt, life was always full, earnest, and heart-felt. Sorrows came to her—many and great sorrows—in her fourteenth year, and she grieved as only the young can grieve. Let those to whom years have brought the philosophic mind, or that toughness of nerve and dulness of sensation which so often does duty for it among respectable, middle-aged people,—let such among my readers try to recal the acuteness of their feelings in early youth, when every grief was a pang and every joy an

ecstasy, and they may form some conception of the poor girl's initiation into that grand mysterious sorrow which gave power and purpose to her life. When she understood the real nature of Arundel Raby's disorder, a strange grief crept over her—a grief compounded of tender pity, shrinking terror, and an almost superstitious veneration. At one time she tried to shut out the remembrance of his face as she had seen it in the oak-parlour; at another time she reproached herself with want of consistent love, in this cowardly shrinking from the thought of his affliction. Day by day her thoughts entwined themselves round the image of her idolised friend. There was not in her affection a particle of any sort of love, conscious or unconscious, but the love of a sister for a very clever and amiable elder brother.—Except, indeed, that Maggie had a reverence for Arundel which she could not have had for a *brother*, because she saw him seldom, and always in *the holidays*—those red-letter days of life. She looked upon him as being in every way superior to herself. Her heart and brain were both terribly shaken when she pictured to herself this perfect creature, stricken like the

sinful Nebuchadnezzar, and made "even as the brutes;" and asked herself if this was *God's will*.

Poor young Margaret ! Her secret struggles of faith, because of Arundel Raby's affliction, brought on the first—I believe, the only serious illness of her life. From this illness she recovered to face her next sorrow—the death of Reginald. It was not the approaching *death* of little Naldo that gave Maggie the intense pain she felt in nursing him, for she did not know he was dying ; it was the child's peculiar state of mind in his last illness which she alone of all the family was aware of. This state of mind must have produced a great effect upon her future character—as may be gathered from the following conversation between these two young creatures, one of whom may be considered as a type of health, the other of disease.

"When we are living together in our little house in the wood, Naldo," said Maggie, "and you are writing beautiful books, and are a celebrated author, we shall be very happy!—Won't it be a proud day for you, little Naldo, when you sit in the midst of the strong and learned men and the beautiful ladies who will come to visit Reginald Hast-

ings, the great author, and they see how weak a body you have, never being able to go about the world to get knowledge as they have done, and yet have beaten them all?"

"Go on, Maggie! go on! I love to hear you talk so! It sounds like a trumpet!"

Maggie went on painting imaginary scenes of future honour and glory to Reginald, ending thus: "You feel that it will all come true, Naldo, don't you? It makes you very happy and strong to think of what you may be one day?—Does it not, dear?"

"Sometimes!" murmured the child, "when *you* talk to me about it. I do love my darling books very much; and indeed, indeed, Maggie, when I know enough I mean to write books! Oh! such beautiful interesting books! but still——"

"Well, darling, what is it?" And another affectionate kiss, another pressure of the feeble body to Maggie's warm heart, brought out the truth in a gush of tears.

"Oh dear! oh dear! If I could only grow up into a *strong* man, I would not care if I was as stupid as William Grey!—Is it very wicked, Maggie? I know God has made me *so*. But I wish he hadn't!" And the little

hand was clenched and the broad brow contracted. "You say I ought to be thankful to God for having made me at all," he went on, in a sullen whisper—"but I am *not*. I can't help trying to find out *why* God let that fall do me so much harm. You say God is always good and merciful. Do you think there is anything good and merciful in that, Maggie? I hadn't done any harm when I was a baby—had I?" And his eyes sought hers with a strange fierceness.

Margaret grew rather pale, but she did not shrink from his scrutiny.

"Naldo, dear, this *is* wicked. You must not talk so."

"But I *think* so. I can't help my thoughts."

"Oh, yes, you can! Every person can help his thoughts. Have you never tried to leave off thinking about a story when you had a lesson to learn?"

"Oh, yes! I can do *that*. But this is different—very different, Maggie. I never told anybody else what I think about God's not being as kind to me as he is to all the others. I feel it is wicked; it makes me hot and angry, and ready to wish you were all as I am. When I say my prayers I don't thank God, *in*

my heart, for having brought me safely to the close of another day; I often really wish I had died in the day."

Margaret's eyes filled with tears as she pressed her lips to Reginald's. She was quite frightened at this revelation of feeling—she feared that God would be angry with her brother, but *she* pitied him too much to be angry. Besides, she was shocked at her own sympathy with him. "What harm *had* Naldo done when he was a baby to be afflicted thus?" and that thought brought another—"What harm had Arundel done that he should be made imbecile?"

Naldo's dark face cleared as he looked at her. "What are you crying for, Maggie?"

"Because you are so unhappy, darling!"—She thought it unkind to say *so wicked*.—"Nobody can be happy who does not love God."

"But loving God would not make me happy—nothing but being strong and straight like other boys would make me happy. Oh! Maggie, you cannot tell what it is to be as I am." And a tear rolled down the flushed cheek. "Sometimes I feel as if I cared for nobody in the world—not even for you; and then I think all these bad things against God,

and wish I were dead, or had never been born—anything, not to be what I am. I should not mind it so much, you know, if I were a girl, or if I wanted to live quietly in the country all my life; but I want to sail round the world—to climb up high mountains—to discover new places—to go where no one ever went before. Most of all, Maggie—you won't tell papa or mamma, will you?"

Maggie assured him that she should not think it right to repeat any of the things he told her in confidence. She had a great idea of keeping a secret.

"I would like to be like Bonaparte."

Margaret started—a start, half surprise, half sympathy.

"Yes, Maggie. When I lie on the sofa in the evening, and they think I am asleep, I am listening to every word papa reads out of the newspapers. I know all about the emperor—'Corsican usurper,' papa *calls* him. Papa little thinks when he's talking against him that I am for him!"—He brightened up and smiled. "I am always so glad when he gains a battle. If I were like other boys, I would be an English Bonaparte when I grow up. It's a fine thing to make oneself

an emperor, and lead conquering armies all over Europe."

It was a fortunate thing for Reginald that Maggie at once confessed that she shared his secret admiration for Napoleon Bonaparte, and led him to talk on the subject, and forget his griefs and repinings. She found her own enthusiasm cool and tame compared with his. He remembered everything he had ever heard or read about his hero ; and related a variety of anecdotes which she did not know. He composed a number of imaginary scenes between him and his generals, and threw no small amount of dramatic talent into them. At last, after talking long and eagerly, he sank back exhausted, murmuring,

" But what is the use of my thinking of all these things ? I can never *do* any of them ! "

Then it was that Maggie felt moved to speak to him about the trouble which his irreligious feelings had produced in her mind.

" Oh, Naldo, dear ! I would not have papa and mamma know what you think and feel for all the world !—and yet, perhaps, it might do you good if they were to talk to you and show you how wrong it is. It would make you happier. I cannot bear to think of all you

said. Perhaps you did not mean it. You spoke in a pet."

"I *did* mean it, though!" said Naldo, in a feeble, sorrowful voice. "I cannot tell a lie even though it would please you. If I am really wicked—and I *must* be, if *you* say I am—try and make me good—like you, darling; but don't go and tell papa and mamma. Their talking would only make me worse. I love them dearly, Maggie; but they don't talk to me like you—they don't understand me; I am only a little boy, and they can't make out what is in me."

"Let them try to make out about *this*, Naldo, darling?" implored Maggie, kissing him. "This is so dreadful!—Suppose you should die as you are!"—and she clasped him convulsively. "Die, not loving God!—You could not go to heaven, you know!" And poor Maggie's tears fell fast, and she groaned in spirit.

"*No, I should go to hell,*" murmured the boy. "But, Maggie, darling, don't cry about that. I have thought about it often before, and have got not to mind it so much as I did. You know, dear, the Bible says that *many* people are on the broad way to destruction,

and few on the narrow path that leadeth to life eternal. Now, I have been thinking that God cannot really be so very merciful to let it be so—indeed, he must be cruel.—He *must* be !” And the poor child started up again.

Poor Margaret ! She turned pale, and shuddered at what appeared to her the acme of sin ; but she still kept her arms round the sinner, and whispered soothing words. “ Don’t talk any more now, dear ; it will do you harm. You are saying such wicked things ! you don’t know.”

“ Yes, I *do* know, Maggie. I have thought of them over and over, though I tried not to think of them. You don’t suppose I *wanted* to make myself unhappy, do you ? If you let me tell you what I have thought, perhaps you can show me that I am wrong. I should be very glad to love God as you do, if I could.—Listen to me ; and don’t cry, or else it will make me cry too.”

Thus conjured, Maggie nerved herself to listen. She has often spoken to me, long years after, of her feelings at the time. She was too young to be scared by the *word* Scepticism, for she scarcely knew its meaning ; but she had a strong instinctive abhorrence of the

thing. That Naldo, her darling brother, should be so wicked as to dare to think God was cruel—to say so—to go to the Holy Bible for proof of it; this was one of the deepest griefs of her life. It clung to her memory like a monstrous and horrid vision. In after years, when she saw with older and wiser eyes, and did not believe the poor little sufferer to be guilty at all—unless of an unchildlike presumption (the moral disease accompanying his strange intellectual precocity)—in those days, when little Naldo came back to her mind as one of the most melancholy and most wonderful phenomena she had ever seen—even then, softened as they were by time, she always retained a very painful recollection of the day on which poor Reginald, with his head on her shoulder, and his arms clasped round her neck, poured forth his confession of infidelity. She could recal the minutest trifle connected with that awful event;—"the day, the hour, the sunshine and the shade—all things pertaining to that place." She always spoke with the most reverent tenderness of the tortures of that young soul.

"Then, tell me all!" she said. "I am sure I shall be able to find some things very wrong

in your thoughts. For the Bible tells us that God is tender-hearted, compassionate, and full of mercy ; and I *know* he is so. I feel it, Naldo. Oh ! how beautiful everything that he has made is ! You said so yourself, darling, to-day, when you were in the garden."

"Yes," replied the child, speaking slowly and thoughtfully. "I wish I could think *that* always, I should be happy then ; but," shaking his head in a mournful way, "I can't. All things are *not* beautiful, Maggie. I am not beautiful. Everything about myself and the world and God puzzles me. I try not to think of them, because I know that I am not old enough,—have not learned enough to be able to understand them quite ; but the more I try not to think of such things, the more the thoughts keep coming and coming to my mind. I can't stop them. I can't understand about God at all. It seems to me there must be two Gods ; one good and the other bad. Why do you look so frightened, dear ? Shall I leave off ?"

"No, no ! Go on. *That* is what the wise men of the East used to think." And Margaret found some consolation in the recollection that people mentioned in the Gospels,

the Eastern Magi who followed the star to the birthplace of the Saviour, had thought what Naldo thought. It seemed to her as if he had still some hold on the Bible and its promises. It was a childish fancy. "Go on, Naldo. *They* thought so till they were taught better."

"I love the *good* God," continued the boy, solemnly; "I often think of Him when I am not in pain; and I feel how wonderful and powerful He is; and that He loves me. Papa's sermons are almost always about God's goodness and power, and that's why I love being at church—for that, and for the organ. Music makes me love God,—and being out on the hills makes me love God. The sunshine, and every beautiful thing—most of all, darling, *you* make me love God. But then, again, there are other times when I seem to see only the *bad* God. Why do you shiver so, Maggie? I do not *mean* to be wicked. *Can* people really *be* wicked when they don't mean it? If so, then I am *sure* there is something wrong, something unfair and unjust in—— Well! I won't *say* it, dear."

"But don't *think* it, darling, darling Naldo! Pray, pray don't!" said Maggie, with stream-

ing eyes. "Some day, when you are much wiser than you are now, you will be shocked at what you say."

"Ah!" said Naldo, mournfully, his dark eyes flashing and his lips quivering, "nobody can understand me. Not even you!—You don't know what it is to feel miserable, and to have no hope of being happy!"

Maggie was silent. She felt that there was a depth in her young brother's affliction which she could not presume to fathom. She did not know the orthodox fashion of treating scepticism in a young mind. It seemed to her a painful disease—not a voluntary evil—a crime.

"You do not know what it is to want to love God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, Maggie—to want to see nothing but good, and yet to be obliged to see a great deal of evil—often more evil than good!—You are so good and so happy, Maggie, that you have never once thought that God did not love you! Even when you were ill, you know, you told me that you were sure it was for the best. I did not think so. I do not think that everything is for the best. I can't see it, at all! I could

not see any good in your having a fever—I cannot see any good in my being made a cripple—nor in poor Arundel’s being—Ah!”—and his voice sunk very low here—“that *is* worse than being as I am. Do you see any good in *that*?—any good, I should like to know, to anybody?—to Lord Merle?—(how wretched he looked the other day when he came here!)—or to his papa and mamma? I heard mamma say to papa, when they thought I was not listening, that she was afraid this attack of Arundel’s would be the death of Lady Carleton. Ah! Maggie, you start at that! I suppose you do not see anything very good in Lady Carleton’s dying of unhappiness, any more than in poor dear Arundel’s being——”

“Don’t say it, darling!” said Maggie, hurriedly putting her hand before his mouth.

“Then there are plenty of other things I can see no good in to anybody? Why is Brutus, as you call him, so stupid, when he longs to be clever? Why is he to be sent to college and to be made a clergyman, instead of being a soldier, as he wants? And why is not papa rich enough now to send poor James to college? And, oh! Maggie, Maggie! why

am I not strong enough to go out into the world and make a great name and fortune for our family? Surely, surely, it was not the *good* God that made all this!—Tell me, Maggie, what *you* think!”

Maggie waited a moment, as if to collect her thoughts. She was offering a simple prayer to God that He would be pleased to open her brother’s eyes, and let him know the truth. Then she tried to speak clearly.

“Naldo, dear, will you let me tell you something about yourself which seems to me *one* reason why you are so unhappy. It is a fault—a great fault.”

“Yes, dear; I do not mind your telling me of my faults. I love you, and I will try to cure them. What is it? I know I am proud and revengeful. I hate people who offend me.”

“It is not that, darling. It is that you have no reverence and respect for what you do not understand. You are very clever, and understand more than almost any boy of your age; and when you come to something you can’t understand—something that is too high and difficult, you are impatient—you want to *know*, instead of quietly and humbly submitting to be ignorant till God gives you the

power to know and understand. You are not humble—you forget that you are but one in many many millions of creatures that God has made imperfect; and that you cannot—nor can the wisest man, comprehend what His meaning was in making you as He has done. But I think we grow humbler and more full of reverence towards God as we grow older (that *is*, being wiser, papa says), that makes us happier; we learn to wait to understand God's will, and if we cannot get to understand at all, we learn to submit without understanding. If you loved God this would be so easy!"

"I think you are right, Maggie." Poor little Naldo had a clear perception in matters of reason—it was remarkable, his father always thought, in so young a child;—it was *disease*; and the disease grew stronger as he approached death. "I am not humble, I have no—what you call *reverence*. I really do not care for what I do not understand. You are not like this, Maggie. I see that. You respect things you understand and things you don't understand. You love God—though I don't think you really understand about His wonderful ways better than I do."

"Yes—a little better, I think, Naldo; be-

cause I love Him. Loving helps us to understand people, even in this world—does not it ? I think, perhaps, we must *love* God before we can understand His will.”

“ But how can I learn to love God ?” said Naldo, sadly.

“ By thinking about Him—trying to see His goodness—by praying to Him. Oh, Naldo, darling ! if I could but make you feel as I do, —*quite sure* that God loves us all !” And Margaret’s face became bright—so bright that Naldo’s heart seemed to warm beneath it.

“ Maggie, I will try to pray—to love God ! Will you pray with me ?—as you pray by yourself ? I do not know how to pray. I can only *say* prayers. That is not what you mean by *praying*, I know. You speak to God—don’t you ?”

“ Yes, darling.”

“ Will you speak to Him for me now—will you pray to Him now ?” asked the boy. “ I feel sorry for having proud and conceited and ungrateful thoughts. Oh, Maggie ! God has given *you* to me ; and He has given me such good parents, and such kind friends, and I have thought always of my being a cripple, and never of you all—I have been ungrateful.

Will God ever love me? Shall I ever love God? Oh! if I could, I would not care for anything that happened. Pray for me, Maggie! Do pray for me!" And the poor boy wept.

His sister laid him on his couch, and clasping his hands in hers, she knelt and prayed that God would be pleased to draw her brother's heart to himself. What words she used she did not remember, but they produced a powerful effect on little Naldo. Every day during this illness, which was his last, she prayed with him in her simple fashion, and at last he consented to allow her to speak to their father on the subject. "Papa knows so much better, and is so much better than I," she said. "Let me ask mamma to tell him?" Mrs. Hastings was quite alarmed when Margaret told her story, but Mr. Hastings, to his wife's great surprise, did not seem to think that Reginald's case had been so very, very bad.

"It is sinful, my dear; but it is a sort of sinfulness to which clever and audacious young minds are liable. Reginald is precocious, and this terrible attack of scepticism, which does not generally come on till the age of seventeen or eighteen with boys of a rea-

soning, speculative turn, has shown itself at the very early age of eleven in our poor child. It is a juvenile malady, my dear ; strong constitutions always get over it. If their previous training has been healthy, and their moral atmosphere good, it has *ultimately* a beneficial effect. The specious arguments of vulgar infidelity have no effect upon them afterwards. It is a sad thing for poor Naldo :—but what a trial for Maggie ! She is full of piety ;—and every word of Naldo's must have been a wound ! Send *her* to me. Go you to Reginald, and tell him I am coming to have some talk with him. Do not look so solemn, my dear ! Do not frighten him ;—no reproaches. You will not heal the broken heart by harsh words or looks ;—you will not draw the timid doubter, and certainly not the proud doubter, to the throne of God by telling him he is unworthy to approach it. Treat him gently ;—this youthful scepticism is a painful malady, believe me."

"Forgive me, Henry !—Henry !—Come to Naldo quickly. Save his soul. I have not told you before, fearing to give you pain ; but I am sure he has not many days to live."

Mr. Hastings started up. They looked at each other, and the wife threw herself into

her husband's arms. "God's will be done!" he said softly. "I had not thought of this!"

* * * * *

Within ten days from that time little Reginald Hastings lay a corpse in his mother's arms. Hers was a deep, mute grief—as her love had been. Like that, it wore away her vital power. When she had seen the features of her darling assume a smiling expression, such as they had never worn in life, she allowed them to take away the body from her lap, and murmured these words:—"His spirit is with God *at last*!" and then sank back insensible.

She was restored to consciousness, but never again to health. Her grief for the loss of Reginald bowed her to the earth. She seemed to carry in her heart the weight of all his earthly sufferings—she could not forget them, nor could she forget how little power she had possessed to alleviate them. All her steady, religious principle could not enable her to cast off this burden, and it broke her heart. I have heard my aunt Margaret say that she never knew any one but her own mother who really died of that often-talked-of disease—a broken heart. My grandmother's undemon-

strative, reserved nature had effectually concealed from every one but her husband the fact that her deformed boy was dearer to her than any earthly thing. And every one else was extremely surprised to find that she died of grief for his loss six months afterwards—every one except their daughter Margaret, who could half interpret her mother's grief by her own.

When she was dead (but not till then) the poor girl knew that it was Naldo's life and death that had blanched her mother's cheek, dimmed her eye, slackened her step, subdued her voice, made her indifferent to most things, and finally laid her in Carleton churchyard.

Naldo and their mother gone! In the short space of six months! Here was a black cloud of sorrow enveloping the Hastings' family, and hanging over the fair land of youth that was spread out before Margaret. More clouds were gathering, and ere long all the sky became dark. Youth is not a season of sunshine to all. Often the young know no sunshine but that which comes from their own bright spirits. This was the case with my dear aunt. Subsequent griefs may seem far more important than those recounted in

this chapter and the last, but these *first* griefs made an indelible impression on her mind. The discovery of mental disease in Arundel Raby, little Naldo's precocious scepticism and his death, darkened her view of this beautiful world; and when her mother's death followed, it seemed an impossible thing that life could ever have another charm for her.

CHAPTER VII.

SUNNY BANK.

"God made the country, and man made the town."

COWPER.

THERE is a moderate-sized house with a large garden to which I must now conduct the reader. I said *there is*, but I should have said there *was*, for the place that knew it knows it no more. It has been swallowed up by the westward flowing tide of London ; and new villas and crescents have sprung up where, forty years since, this well-cared-for homestead delighted its owner's eyes. It was a sweet place—an English gentleman's home and hobby. It was sheltered from curious eyes and cold winds, and was enclosed on all sides but one, which was exposed to the south-western sun, and whence a prospect worth looking at was to be seen. This little domain

contained about five acres of fertile ground, and was tastefully laid out in lawn, shrubbery, paddock, flower, and kitchen garden. The house had nothing of the appearance of a modern suburban villa. Still it was suburban,—even in the year 18—, for it was at Brompton;—lying between the present Kensington and Brompton roads; and it might, perhaps, be called a *villa*, since it was too large for a cottage of gentility, containing fourteen rooms, besides stabling and other offices. As these offices included a dairy, a cow-house, a pigsty, and a poultry-yard, the place had a slight tendency to be a farm. But this tendency only improved the commissariat department within doors, and bated not a jot of the refinement and beauty without. This place was Sunny Bank, the property of Miss Hastings, my great-aunt, or, as she was called sometimes, Dr. Ward's Miss Hastings. It had been purchased by her father, and he had made it what it was. After his death and that of her mother, Miss Hastings would not leave the place, but was careful to keep it in the state in which her father kept it.

* * * * *

It was a quarter past seven o'clock, A.M.,

on a beautiful February morning, and the newly-risen sun had sent an army of golden beams to light up the south-east side of Sunny Bank in a style of uncommon brilliancy.

"What a blessed morning! Almost like summer, Joseph," said Audrey, the house-keeper, as she passed round the front of the house hurriedly, on her way to the cow-house, "I'm rather late this morning. How pretty your snowdrops look!"

"Good morning, Mistress Audrey! You're looking as bright as the morning, though you did sit up till such an unchristian hour last night."

"Well! it *was* late, but my mistress and her niece and nephew seemed to have a great deal to say, and they kept on talk, talk, talk. Mistress quite forgot I was sitting up. But I'd sit up night after night for her if she had always got some one to talk to in that free hearty way. For though Miss Margaret is but a slip of a girl, and very dull and sad-like just now, poor child—you know it's *her* mother mistress put on mourning for about a month back——"

"Yes, yes! Mr. Hastings' wife, down at the Rectory at Carleton. I know."

"Well, though she's cast down a bit just now, yet I hear she's uncommon lively in a general way, and full of fun. It will do us good to see a young thing about the place. We are all growing old here, I declare, Joseph! It's very silly. I wish we sprang up fresh again every year like your snowdrops!"

Joseph looked a little astonished, and was anxious to explain *why* her wish could not be gratified. "You see, Audrey, we ain't in the nature of bulbs and annuals—we are perennials. But the spring takes an effect on *us*, you know. It's my belief that it's the turn of the year that's done the good to Master Arundel, and made him like other folks again. It was just the sap mounting up into his brain and making it alive. I hope he's going on well in his father's grand London house. It ain't as good for him as our place, I'm thinking. Lor, Audrey! I'm fain to sing for joy, like the birds, on such a morning. Surely this is a beautiful world! One would be loth to leave it. Well, well! I do miss him every day about the garden. Not that he ever took notice of the flower-beds much. It was the shrubbery, and the paddock, and the splashing water that he cared for. But I'd

got used to see him wandering about, taking no notice of anybody, and looking as if he had got the most beautiful things before his eyes, only he couldn't see 'em clear. But now he's sensible again he looks like other folks. He said, 'Good morning, Rosemary!' and gave me a guinea the morning he went away, just like any other young gentleman. And now, I suppose, he will go, and do all sorts of mischief like the rest of them.—Perhaps it would have been better for him if he had remained a simpleton, and stayed here!"

"Lor, Joseph! But I wish he hadn't gone just now! Because, now he's quite right again, he would have been a nice companion for Missy Margaret, who is come to stay a long time. We are all too old for her. Young people ought to be with young people."

"So they should, Audrey—so they should! —But folks need not leave off being young unless they like. What should make *me* old?"

"Rheumatism," replied Audrey, laughing. "But, for all that, you are a young-hearted old chap. Take care of yourself, and maybe I'll have you for my second."

"Ah!—I don't like *that* bargain.—Take me for your first, Audrey. You'd better."

"No, no.—I can't do that!"—said Audrey, laughing heartily.

"Well, I see you take after your mistress, and mean to die an old maid!"

"What time is it now, Joseph?"

He looked up at the sun just as if it had a dial-plate on its face, and replied,

"About half-past seven. But don't go yet, Audrey. I knew you would be late this morning; so I went and milked the cows and turned them out for you; just go to the corner, and you will see them eating as fast as ever they can, at the other end of the paddock."

Audrey moved along the grassy terrace that ran in front of the house, till she came to the corner, whence she could command a view of the upper end of the paddock. "They are there, safe enough," she said to herself. "Well! he's a thoughtful, kind body, bless him! And some day, perhaps—but——What's that?" she exclaimed, as she caught sight of a girlish form in the distance. By the black frock, the large straw hat and black ribbon, and the light, but slow step, she knew who it

was—Miss Margaret ! “ Ah ! country young ladies are used to early rising. Well ! I must go in and see about the breakfast. I dare say she'll have an appetite after her journey yesterday. She didn't touch a morsel of the nice little supper last night. Mr. James said he must be in town at ten o'clock—didn't he, Joseph ? ”

“ Yes ;—but you need not run off. They can't want breakfast yet. There is nobody stirring.”

“ Yes. Missy Margaret is up and out yonder, looking at the waterfall. She'll be down here presently to look at your borders. She's never been here since she can remember, so you must show her what's most worth seeing.”

“ Then *you* must stay, Audrey ! ” Audrey laughed, and told him he was as polite as a Frenchman. “ One moment, Audrey. What *do* you object to in me *most*, because I will begin by altering that.”

“ Altering at *your* age—why, you're fifty years old ! Well, in the first place, I should like to have all your features altered——”

“ All !—Won't one of them do ? ”

“ Not one. Your eyes are too small, your

nose too large, your forehead too low, your chin too high——”

“ Ah! that’s enough. I see you don’t love me a bit.”

“ I’ve told you so often enough.”

“ And yet, somehow, Audrey, I love *you* so well that I have been fool enough to fancy you must come to love me in return.”

“ I can’t help that!—Good morning, Mr. Rosemary! There comes Miss Margaret. Thank you for milking the cows. You shall have a round of hot toast when you come in to breakfast. I’m always grateful!” And Audrey withdrew, laughing.

“ I’d rather have something else, Audrey!” said the blithe old gardener, with a knowing look; “ and I’ll have it, too, saucy as you are—when I can get it.”

The merry, middle-aged loves of Audrey and Joseph Rosemary tended very much to lighten the burden of life within the peaceful precincts of Sunny Bank; and so did some younger loves. Ann, the housemaid, told George, the foot-boy, or *ci-devant* boy, as they watched the couple from the window, that for her part she thought Mrs. Audrey was in the right of it.—“ Courting-days was a deal

better than married life. There was always plenty of love before marriage, and little enough afterwards."

George looked half-loving and half-logical as he replied that, "There was a deal of wisdom in her words.—There always was! As a rule, it was quite true that there was more love before than after marriage, and therefore Mistress Audrey and other women were quite right in putting off the wedding-day as long as possible—but she (Ann) had confounded an exception with a rule. Was *he* (George) like any other man?—he asked her *that*." Ann was obliged to confess that she did not think he was. "Well, then, I will tell you, Ann. I know women pretty well!"—(he was just twenty-one)—"and I declare that there's no other woman I ever saw like *you*.—There now!"

"Lor! what nonsense, George!"

"'Pon my honour, now!"

"Well, and what of that?"

"Why this—it follows, of course, that if we are both different from other people, our marriage will be different—doesn't it?"

Ann was not able to raise any objection to this conclusion.

"Then don't you think," said George, "that you might safely give me a little more love before marriage, without any fear of diminishing the stock that is to serve us afterwards. I put it to you now as a reasonable girl, Ann. Could you not, for instance, oblige me with a kiss just now, instead of throwing a duster in my face?—Well, as I *must* have a kiss, and you won't *give* it me, —there is but one way left.—Is there, now? —I appeal to your reason."

"Is that the way you appeal to a young woman's reason, sir?" asked Mistress Audrey, coming into the room just as George was helping himself to the little delicacy he had set his heart upon. Ann flung herself away in some confusion, but George faced Mrs. Audrey boldly.

"Yes, my dear Mrs. Audrey—of course it is;—a woman of your experience must know well enough that *that's* the only way of appealing to a woman's reason. It's what scholars call the *argumentum de fæminam*."

"Oh, indeed, Mr. Jackanapes!" said Audrey—with whom George was a great favourite, having been brought into the family by herself when he was only fourteen. "And pray

where did you learn *that*, and the Latin for it?"

"Why, I learned the truth itself without anybody's help. I discovered it. Didn't I, Ann?"

"Don't be a fool!" said Ann, busily laying the breakfast-cloth to conceal her high admiration of her lover's "blessed impercence."

"Certainly not, my dear. I couldn't if I would, you know.—Then, as the knowledge came by nature, you see I wasn't long in getting the Latin name.—I haven't been backwards and forwards to Eton for nothing."

"You don't mean to say that you learned anything about kissing from boys like Lord Merle? Why, he's only a little more than fifteen!" exclaimed Audrey, while Ann held up her hands in astonishment.

George burst into a laugh. "Well, you women are a queer lot!—Why, bless your innocence! What do you suppose young noblemen and gentlemen go to a public school for?"

"I know," said Audrey, "that some of 'em learn lots of wickedness there; and that it sticks to them ever after—but I did not think such a sweet young gentleman as Lord Merle

(bless his handsome face!)—so sorry for his brother as he always seemed when he came here, for I've seen the tears run down his face as he looked at him—I can't bear to think that he's quite corrupted like young —— and —— and ——. God help his poor mother! But she's dying they say—so it's to be hoped she knows nothing of his viciousness—gambling and drinking, too, I dare say. Why, perhaps you'll say the same things of Mr. James Hastings, and he in the house now! Oh, George! George!”

“Get along with you!” said Ann, indignantly; “I hate you! You must be very wicked yourself to know of so much wickedness in others!”

“And you a mere boy, too!” said Audrey, looking quite disconsolate.

“Why, what *have* I done? Come here, both of you.—No.—I *will* make you hear me;” and the young man threw an arm round each of them. “Now listen to me, both of you,” he said, turning his good-looking, clever, and perfectly honest face first to one and then to the other, in the course of his harangue; “did I say any harm of Mr. James, or of Lord Merle?”

" You said they taught you *that* argument stuff," said Ann, flashing her black eyes up into his face.

" I didn't. I said *you* taught it me. But listen now. Don't you either of you take it into your heads that Lord Merle is the least bit of a scamp—for he isn't, though I have seen him kiss a girl or two ; and when Mr. James said something to him about its being very foolish—he said, in his lively way, that it was a new form of logic he was learning—it was the *argumentum ad fæminam*. But don't you think that he's got any real *vice* in him. Pooh ! pooh ! A man, or a boy either, may snatch a kiss once in a way, without being a rogue, or a profligate. The girls Lord Merle kissed were quite ready to kiss him."

" The impudent things !" exclaimed the two virtuous listeners.

" No, no ! they weren't that either, Mrs. Audrey. They were respectable country lasses, who saw some fun, and no harm, in a kiss. They were not a bit more impudent than you two, who are right modest women, and yet will see no harm in making matters up with me at this precise moment by an *argu-*

mentum ad feminam !"—So saying he kissed a cheek of each with the utmost assurance.

" 'Pon my word, Mr. George Green !" exclaimed Audrey, trying to be angry, but being unable to suppress a laugh. " It's well Lord Merle has begged that place at Carleton for you from the earl !—we couldn't bear you here much longer, you're a deal too clever for us ! The Carleton folks won't know you ! Your father hasn't had any game to preserve half as cunning or as wild as you. I'd have nothing to do with him, Ann, if I were you !—But we mustn't stand fooling here any longer ! Run into the kitchen and see that the urn is ready, there's a good fellow ! I'm coming to broil the ham."

" I say, Ann, my girl !" — said Audrey, when he was gone, " George is a good fellow, every inch of him ; but don't you let him appeal to your reason very often !—That cloth is all awry."

" Never fear, Mistress Audrey ! I'm a little flurried like this morning, because the young gentleman, Mr. James, gave George a note from the bailiff down at Carleton Park, saying how my Lord Carleton had ordered that George was to be the new gate-keeper ; that

the lodge was ready for him to move into as soon as he liked; and that he was to have fifty pounds a year, besides house and garden, and fire-wood—and—and——”

“And George wants you to marry him directly, eh?”

“Yes!—and I said I would, come next May—if so be as you was suited with a person in my place. I wouldn’t put you or mistress to an ill-conveniency.”

“I know that, child!” said Audrey—forgetting her business again, and putting her hand on the girl’s shoulder. “Well, well! I trust it may be for the best. Try your luck, Ann, try your luck; we’re not all lucky alike. Marriage is a lottery. He’s a good youth, and you are a good girl. So you are going to live at Carleton! You’ll be monstrous dull, Ann. I never was there—though I’ve heard of few other places all my life.”

“You must come and see George and me,” said Ann, as if she really meant it.

“God forbid!” ejaculated Audrey. Then, trying to make Ann forget the earnest tone of these two words, she began to open closets and take out marmalades and cakes for the breakfast. Mr. James’s foot was heard on the

stairs, and Miss Hastings would be down at half-past eight, so that there was no more time for talk among the servants just then.

When James Hastings stepped through the front porch on to the terrace, he found his sister Margaret standing near Joseph Rosemary, watching the masterly way in which he was training a great honeysuckle that mantled a corner of the house. The bright, fresh morning had communicated some of its virtue to Margaret's young heart. She sprang forward to meet her brother.

"Oh, James!—what a dear, sweet place this is! And what a delightful, stupid old fellow Joseph is! He reminds me of Cuthbert—because he is so very much unlike him!" she added, in a whisper. "'A good old man, but he will be talking.'"

"Oh! you've found out his weak point, have you?—Good morning, Joseph! A fine morning!—a remarkably fine morning for the worms and the early birds, Joseph!"

"Why, yes, Mr. James; I don't see as anything has much reason to find fault with this morning!—So, you're not going to stay with us, sir; I'm sorry for it. Our air is very good. You'll be poisoned with the smoke."

"Oh, I shall come down here every Saturday, and spend Sunday."

"And so, sir, you ain't to be a clergyman after all. Well ! please God, you'll not be the worse man of business for having learned a little of parsoning !"

"I hope not, Joseph. There's a ring at the gate." And away trotted Joseph to open it. "Come, Maggie ; I want you to take a turn in the shrubbery with me before breakfast."

Joseph took in a letter handed him by a man in the Carleton livery, who afterwards stayed to have a slight chat with him. When the chat was over, Joseph carried the letter to the kitchen, and gave it to Ann, who was the first person he came across. "For mistress," he said ; and then hurried back to his work, with his head full of the news the messenger had communicated. "Poor Lady Carleton ! Quite young, too !—not forty !—But it may be all a false alarm. Doctors *must* make a fuss about every trifle that is the matter with rich and great folks, or how could they ride in their carriages ? Now, I'm thinking, if they'd let her come here and be quiet, *our* air and *our* mistress would set her up again. Anyhow, it's a fine thing to think

that Mr. Arundel is quite right again ! Won't leave his mother ! Barnes says. And she can't bear to have him out of her sight. Poor thing ! poor thing !—Here's mistress. I suppose she's got the note.—Good morning, ma'am ! Mr. James and the young lady are up in the shrubbery. Ah ! you're looking at the snowdrops, ma'am," he added, rubbing his hands with pleasure ; "they *are* fine !—They never look so well as they do in the early morning. And see, the new crocuses are coming up very nicely, ma'am !"

"Yes, Joseph ; everything here looks well."

"She knows something about a garden !—It's a pleasure to work for her !" said the old man, to himself, as she passed on. He was very happy thinking over his work for the coming month, and forgetting everything unpleasant, except the fear of blight or frost—until George came to summon him to breakfast.

When James had departed to his daily occupation at a bank in London, young Margaret was left alone with her somewhat formidable aunt. They walked about the garden, which the young girl admired very much,—

they talked of family matters,—of James's prospects, of Sophia's admirers,—of Margaret's own studies. But they did not speak of the subject nearest to Maggie's heart just then—her aunt's late inmate, Arundel Raby, and his mother. She was about to ask *when* her aunt would take her to see Lady Carleton, when some morning visitors arrived.

After the visitors were gone, Miss Hastings told Margaret she must amuse herself till dinner-time, as she was obliged to go out alone. Margaret strolled about the garden and the apartments, thinking a good deal of this dignified and severe, but kind aunt. She had heard of her benevolence and of her unusual studies and occupations. Finding the door of the small library open, she went in to examine it. To her surprise it was not at all pretty—not even comfortable, she thought,—as every other room in the house was, except her aunt's bedroom. There and in this little library a severe economy, not to say privation, reigned. They were like what Margaret imagined the cell and study of a monk would be. The dormitory was uncarpeted—the bedstead was uncurtained—instead of a down bed Miss Hastings slept on a

mattress. Her toilette was of the simplest kind—if I except the washing apparatus, which was extensive; giving rise to Audrey's saying, that "Miss Hastings would kill herself with cold water," for in those days the vulgar mind in England was not familiar with the idea of bathing. As to *garde-robes*, *armoires*, and female necessities of that kind, Miss Hastings troubled herself little about them. One large old-fashioned chest of drawers contained all her apparel. Her morning-dress was of striped gingham, and her dinner-dress of black silk or satin, with a kerchief of white lace.

The library was completely lined with books, the greater part collected by her father—the rest by Miss Hastings herself. Of these last the largest portion consisted of medical books which treated of diseases of the brain. The only articles of furniture in the library were a large table, on which lay a desk, flanked by piles of books,—a side-table, on which lay several rolls—maps Margaret supposed them to be,—and two chairs—one a cushioned *Voltaire*, which stood by the fireplace for the use of Dr. Ward, the only visitor who was allowed to step into Miss Hastings'

sanctum; and the other a common straight-backed seat, which stood by the table.

Margaret was much struck by the appearance of this room. It looked bare and simple, and, in spite of the brightly-blazing fire, it was cold. She wondered much that there were no flowers—no pictures—for she knew that her aunt had great taste. She had seen and admired its display in the drawing and breakfast-rooms and in the garden. Why did she banish all beauty from her own study?—“Oh!” thought she, “if I had this library for my own I would make it look so pretty! I should not be able to look at my book for looking at the beautiful things.—Ah! how very wise my aunt is! She keeps all temptation out of her way when she is here.—I suppose I may unroll these things and see what they are!”

She accordingly began to unroll one of the supposed maps, and found it to be one of a country quite unknown to her. It was a drawing of a magnified section of the anterior portion of the brain. It was coloured to imitate nature. Margaret shrank back, and allowed the large sheet to roll up of itself again. She took another, and began to unroll

it—but no sooner caught the profile of “*un crétin de la Suisse*” than she let it drop from her hand. Picking it up hastily, she threw it on the table—and tried to examine another. This time her courage was roused. “I *will* look at this one!”—and she did look at it. She looked at it long—very long—and the tears streamed down her cheeks as she murmured—“How like!”

It was a crayon portrait of Arundel Raby, taken in the first period of his late mental derangement. I have the drawing in my possession at this moment. It is not much like him as I knew him; but it is a remarkably beautiful face—the loss of reason does not deprive it of the charm which ever accompanies purity of form—indeed, you feel that reason has only fallen asleep on her throne, and that she will awake again and light up those glorious features anew. No one could look at that face, I think, and believe that its owner was an incurable maniac or idiot. It is like the face of the Belvidere Apollo—like what it would be if you could deprive it of all its intelligence and its beautiful scorn—giving it instead an expression of melancholy dejection. My aunt had seen no copy of the

Apollo in those days, nor any other form of pre-eminent youthful beauty with which to compare her friend, except his brother.

Presently she saw some writing in pencil along the margin of the drawing, and was about to read it, when she paused, rolled up the drawing, and laid it down again. She went on thinking to herself:

“ Perhaps I ought not even to look at these things !—I did not ask leave. I will not read that writing, though it must concern Arundel, and I would give a great deal to know all about his illness, and how my aunt cured him ; for papa says she *did* cure him. If she would tell me a little about how to manage people who have attacks of insanity like Arundel !—I will ask her. Papa says all learned people are fond of talking about their studies. I suppose my aunt is as learned as a physician. But I cannot quite understand how she can take a pleasure, as James says she does, in going to see all sorts of mad people. To go to see some one she loved, if he were mad—even to have him in her house as she did Arundel—*that* I can understand ! I think I could bear to see those I love suffer in *that* way—worse than poor

Naldo's!—but strangers! Aunt must be a much better Christian than most people! 'If ye love them that love you, what reward have ye?—do not even the publicans the same?' It is those who are despised and trodden down of men that she cares for."

She approached the table again. "I *may* look at the books, I suppose! What is this new one, with the handsome binding? Oh, a presentation copy!—'*A Mademoiselle Hastings, avec les sentiments distingués de l'Auteur.*' Oh, my aunt knows French authors, does she? If it were a book of fairy tales, now! Let me see:—'*Traité Médico-Philosophique sur l'Aliénation Mentale, par Ph. Pinel, Médecin consultant de sa Majesté l'Empereur et Roi,*' &c. &c. Humph!" She took up another book—" '*An Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Mental Derangement.*' " Another—" '*Annals of Insanity, Lunacy, or Madness.*' " Then another—" '*Treatise on the Real Cause of Insanity—Harper.*' All about insanity. Let me look at the shelves. '*Über Melancholie,*' that's German! '*Della Pazzia in generale ed in spezie,*' Italian!! Oh, auntie! auntie! how did you ever find time to learn all these languages? '*Observations, par M. Pussin,*

sur les Fous de Bicêtre.' Where is Bicêtre, I wonder! 'Medical Journal.' What a number of volumes. What's this? 'Observations on Insanity, by John Haslam.' Oh, dear! oh, dear!" She sat down on her aunt's chair before the desk, and mused.

"Insanity! nothing but insanity! '*Fous!*' '*Insensés!*' '*Aliénés!*' To look at all those books one would think half the world was insane! James says that there are a great many more people of unsound mind than I suppose. What a dreadful thing! But dear Arundel was not mad. He never hurt anybody—was never violent. I wonder whether there are many kinds of madness—some that can be cured! Oh, yes! learned physicians would not go on writing so many books about a disease they know they cannot cure! Aunt *has* cured, or helped Dr. Ward to cure, insane people. How happy it must make her! If I had any one I loved dearly, dearly, and he was to go raving mad, what should I feel towards any one who would cure him? But I talk about madness; I never saw a mad person." And she shuddered. "I don't think I could bear to see any one really mad! Even now, it makes me cold all over when I think of Arundel as I saw him that evening.—But he surely was

not what is called mad! Yet, how dreadful it was to see *him* look, as if he had no understanding! James says he is cleverer than ever now, and gayer than he used to be. I shall see him soon!"

Her thoughts were wandering away to a pleasant subject, when her eye fell on the open page before her, where she read these words—" '*Aliénation originaire ou héréditaire.*' I should like to know something about this terrible disease—and yet it frightens me!" Her hand trembled so that she could scarcely turn over the leaves. As she was forcing her mind to the comprehension of some sentence in the book, her aunt entered.

When she saw how Margaret was employed, she put her hand over the open page, and said, "My dear child, never open any books or papers you may chance to see here. There are plenty of books in the drawing-room that will instruct and amuse you. These books are not fit for you. Give me your promise that you will not look into any of them."

Margaret promised, for there was a tone of command in her aunt's voice which she could not resist, and the crowd of questions retreated from her lips. She certainly was a little afraid of her aunt.

Dinner and tea-time passed, and Margaret, though not cheerful, was beguiled by the novelty of all about her, and felt none of the melancholy which had oppressed her ever since her mother's death. She felt it slightly in the evening, when, seated in Dr. Ward's chair, in the study, she watched her grave aunt steadily reading the forbidden Pinel. The poor girl's thoughts wandered away home ; she leaned back and closed her eyes, the better to call up before her a picture of the drawing-room at the Rectory, as it would be at that moment. She knew where her papa would be sitting, and what book he would be reading aloud, in order to make the motherless group a little gayer by his presence. She could see Sophia, and Tom, and Clara ; and Henry, she fancied, would be with them.

Just as she was settling in her own mind what Henry would be doing, a loud ring at the gate-bell was heard. It startled both aunt and niece. The former pushed back her book, and remained looking towards the door, with some anxiety depicted in her face. Margaret sat up, and looked at the door too.

CHAPTER VIII.

LOVE AND DEATH.

"Yet in these ears till hearing dies,
One set slow bell will seem to toll
The passing of the sweetest soul
That ever looked from human eyes."

In Memoriam.

A CARRIAGE was heard winding slowly along the little drive from the gate to the house, and there was some confusion among the servants at this unusually late visit. Within a minute after the carriage drew up at the porch, a man's step, rapid and somewhat heavy, was heard approaching the door of the study, which was thrown open by Audrey, and the visitor walked in before she could announce him. As the room was ill-lighted by the single reading-lamp which stood on the table beside Miss Hastings, and which dazzled her eyes as she looked up, she

could not, at first, discern his face. Her niece, who was lost in shadow, and who remained unperceived by the new comer for some minutes, knew him in a moment, notwithstanding a certain strange, almost stern look, which was not habitual to him. It was the Earl of Carleton. He stood looking at Miss Hastings till she recognised him. As soon as she did so, she became paler than usual, and rising slowly, advanced a step.

"What is it brings you here?" she inquired in a gentle voice. "Is Arundel——"

"No! Not Arundel. My wife."

"Ah! Is she worse?"

"You had my note this morning?"

"A note from you? I have not received it."

"Strange! It was delivered to one of your servants. I ought to have been sure that it never reached your hands!—I wrote at Caroline's request, soon after Dr. Ward's announcement, early this morning, that within thirty hours she would be no more. She has something to communicate to you before——" For the first time his voice faltered a little.

"Can it be possible! Is she so much changed since I last saw her three days ago?"

"There is little perceptible change in her. You will come?—I cannot wait! Nothing but her earnest entreaty could have induced me to leave her. She believes that you would not refuse if I came myself. We were sorely puzzled that you neither came nor replied to my note."

"In one moment I shall be ready. Wait here." And she left the room.

Lord Carleton began to pace to and fro with his eyes bent on the floor. He looked sterner than ever; but Maggie was brave when moved by affection; she would have faced fifty stern pre-occupied men to gain her object now. She rose from the great chair, stood before him, and looking steadily into his face, said,

"May I go with you and my aunt? I love Lady Carleton. She will not be able to see me—I know *that*. Only let me go to the house! I will be still—keep out of everybody's way! Only let me be near her!"—And she clasped her hands in earnest supplication.

The fixed severity of Lord Carleton's face relaxed. He laid his hand on her head gently. "My good little girl, I know that you love her, and that she loves you!—She spoke of

you to-day,—said she wished to see you. But you will hereafter be *obliged*, perhaps, to see those you love die. It is very painful. You had better remain here.”

“ You forget, my lord. It is but two months since I saw my own mother die—and before that, Naldo. I can bear death. Do not think I am too young!—Let me see dear Lady Carleton once more !”

“ As you please, my child. Ask your aunt,” he replied, relapsing into his former manner, as Miss Hastings returned, wrapped in a large cloak. “ May your niece come with us? Caroline will like to see her for a moment. She is attached to the child.”

Miss Hastings looked in Margaret’s face, and then said,

“ Yes, my dear, you may come with us. You will find a wrapper as we go through the hall.—I am quite ready.”

Without the interchange of another word, they all three entered the carriage, and the silence was not broken during the time they were being driven rapidly along the road from Brompton to St. James’s-square; a dark and dismal road in those days—so dark that they

scarcely caught sight of each other once during the transit.

Miss Hastings and Lord Carleton reclined in opposite corners. It was more than twenty years ago—almost five-and-twenty, since they were last in a carriage together. On that occasion they had passed over this very same ground. They were returning then from a first visit—a visit of examination and approval—to Sunny Bank, after the completion of the purchase by old Mr. Hastings. Sorrow had not touched Miss Hastings then; they were both full of hope then; they were in the golden prime of life, dreaming together that sweetest, fairest dream of young love;—a dream in which no one ever dreams that he *is* dreaming—a dream which seems as everlasting as the heavens, and as impossible to be worn out by sorrow and change;—the only dream of this earth which, when we are once fully, sadly, soberly awake from it, we know will never, never come again!—Oh, youth! oh, love! oh, change!

“Oh, last regret! regret can die!”

Had any one recounted to the boy and girl

of that bygone spring day—the circumstances under which they would next traverse that road together, they would have said, “It is impossible ! *We* cease to be all in all to each other ?—We could not live if it were so !” —

As they sat now—no more hand in hand—each with closed eyes, absorbed in the contemplation of the sad present, changed in so much of their being from what they once were—not willing, even had they been able, to be to each other now what they would once have deemed it worse than death *not* to be ; each with a vague secret sense of disappointment (just or unjust) against the other—suddenly, and at the same moment, the recollection of that distant day recurred to both of them. The commonest circumstance—merely the momentary check of the carriage at the old turnpike in Knightsbridge—brought the same thought, flashing like lightning through each mind—“ Does she remember that day ? ” — “ Does he remember ? ”

At length the carriage stopped at Raby House. Silent, rapid, and obsequious, the powdered porters threw open the doors, and Maggie and her aunt stood in the splendid vestibule. A preternatural stillness reigned—

yet there were groups of servants, who whispered with grave faces, and seemed to be eagerly expecting some intelligence. Lord Carleton beckoned to one, and whispered some words, as he conducted his companions past the others, who were now hushed into silence, and stood back respectfully on either hand. Miss Hastings caught these words in reply :

“ No change, my lord !—Dr. Ward desired me to tell you that he was compelled to go away for an hour or two. He will return as soon as he can.”

Young Margaret followed her aunt and Lord Carleton up the staircase, where classic beauty smiled a perpetual calm in marble. Instead of being attracted, as she would have been at another time by those glorious statues, she shrank from gazing on them, and said to herself, “ They should be veiled in time of mourning.” It was a natural thought ! These lovely unsympathetic faces—smiling calmly in godlike serenity, aggravate the burden of the mourner. They should not be allowed to crush the sufferers who pass and repass before them with their proud indifference, their sweet heathen superiority to all

human sorrow. Only the Niobe, the Laocoon, the Gladiator, the Clyte, and those sculptured forms that breathe out sorrow with their beauty—of which we think to ourselves—

“How beautiful! If sorrow had not made—
Sorrow more beautiful than beauty’s self!”

Only such statues should remain uncovered in the house while the Angel of Death hovers over it.—Thus would Margaret have followed out her thought had she been somewhat older.

Miss Price weeping, and somewhat bent with years, met them at the top of the staircase.

“I will leave you now!” whispered Lord Carleton to Miss Hastings, and walked rapidly forward.

“Why did you not come before?” asked Miss Price, as they followed him slowly.

“A servant neglected to give me the note.”

“Ah! poor Caroline!”

“Why is she so anxious to see me?”

“I cannot tell. She wished to see you before she saw her lawyer to-day. She has some control of the North Ashurst estates—

though they are entailed on the second son. I believe there is a difference of opinion between her and the lawyer—between her and Lord Carleton. She remains firm. It concerns Arundel, of course. I wish she had not such things to trouble her at this time!”

“She cannot want to consult me about this. I know nothing of it. It must be about Arundel’s health. How are he and his brother?”

“Lord Merle is quite ill with grief. Poor young thing! But it is wonderful to see Arundel so calm and self-possessed. He waits on his mother, writes for her, reads to her—will not leave her. When she is attacked by sharp pains, as she was just now when you arrived, the boy soothes her with music—which seems to produce a better effect than any medicine. How he can get steadiness of hand and voice to play and sing in such circumstances, is marvellous!—Music has more influence upon them both than upon any persons I ever saw. Dr. Ward approves of it, and says that physicians would often find music of more use in nervous disorders than half the pharmacopœia.”

Miss Price was growing old, and was rather more profuse in words, when under excitement, than she had been formerly.

“Hark!” exclaimed Miss Hastings, “that is Arundel singing now! She is still in pain, then.”

A door in the distance seemed to open for a minute, and then to close again, letting out a melodious wave of sound, which swelled forward towards them, and then receded, and was swallowed up again in silence. Maggie recognised the dear familiar music—“I know that my Redeemer liveth.”

They entered a room; it was so spacious and lofty that the candelabras on the table near the fire only lighted a small portion of it which was partially enclosed by an Indian screen—the rest was a sort of “palpable obscure,” in which large, massy pieces of furniture and draped windows loomed like spectral insubstantial forms; it had an inexpressibly melancholy aspect, and the visitors turned their eyes from the gloom and drew near to the fire.

“You must be cold,” said the old lady. “The servants forget to attend to the fires;

they forget everything now!"—And she endeavoured to mend the fire.

Miss Hastings took the heavy poker from her feeble hand and produced a blaze. This blaze revealed a sofa, at a little distance, on which some one was sleeping.

"It is poor Frank!" said Miss Price. "He is quite overwhelmed with the violence of his grief."

"He looks very pale and thin!" said Miss Hastings, approaching him compassionately. Those who are old in grief generally feel strong pity for the young who are tasting it for the first time. While she was looking at him his brother came into the room.

Maggie had not seen Arundel since that memorable evening in the old room at Carleton, which she could not bear to recal.

He was a slender youth—tall for his age, and less awkward than growing boys generally are. He was naturally paler and less handsome than his brother, and although all trace of mental disease was gone from his countenance, there was an habitual melancholy in the expression—a certain stillness which gave the face the effect of being seen in shadow.

This effect was increased by the colour of the complexion, which was a pale olive. A painter would say it had a true Italian *tone*—it was what Audrey called “dreadful sallow.” The boy’s step, like every outward characteristic, had changed since his complete recovery. It was now light, firm, decided;—there was no more inert dragging of the limbs, as if all motion were hateful;—no fitful, vague gliding anywhere—without care or intention in moving; no stealthy stepping, so that the footfall could not be heard. All such indications of insanity in gait and bearing were gone. He moved, looked, spoke no more, either like a disembodied spirit—or like the mere form and substance of humanity without its true essence. But if Arundel was unlike the insane youth she had seen last summer, Maggie thought he was equally unlike the companion and protector of her childish days, whose image she so enthusiastically revered. She could scarcely believe it was her old friend who now approached her aunt, and said, in a set measured tone, as if he were repeating a lesson :

“Dear Miss Hastings, my mother has sent

me to conduct you to her. Can you come now?"

"Oh, how he is changed!" she thought; "he's grown into a man!" And the affectionate girl felt a severe pang. It was not a selfish pang—the bitterness lay in the fact that her idol, her model, her beloved friend *was changed*—not that he was changed *to her*.

As he was about to leave the room, Arundel saw Maggie. A new expression, something like a gleam of pleasure, came over his face, and he was about to go back and speak to her, but her eyes were bent on the ground, and Miss Hastings was waiting for him to open the door. As he followed that lady out of the room he cast another glance back at Maggie; she was looking at him, and her eyes were full of tears.

Miss Price and Margaret then sat down in silence to await Miss Hastings' return. Maggie was heartily glad Miss Price did not ask her any questions.—She sat trying to arrange her thoughts—the many new thoughts that had been crowding in on her mind during the last twenty-four hours. She communed with herself in this manner:

“Is this the beginning of real life? James says I have hitherto led the thoughtless life of a child, and the ideal life of a dreamer.—Everything has been new to me since I left home! New, strange, and yet as if it all concerned me intimately! Sunny Bank, my Aunt, Lord Carleton, Lady Carleton, this grand house, Arundel;—they all belong to me, and I belong to them, and they are all unhappy, and I am so weak, and ignorant, and young, I cannot help them!—But in all places and circumstances there is a good and gracious Father above me—who sees and hears.”

To that gracious God, whose presence Margaret loved to realise in joy or sorrow, she poured out her heart, in simple prayer for the happiness of all these dear ones;—that he would restore to health one whose death would embitter the lives of so many!—In her child-like faith she half believed she should have the prayer granted, because it was sincere and single-minded. She was a child—she thought as a child, she understood as a child, and the time had not come for her to put away childish things; among others, the habit of prayer for special favours—instead of the faithful though

trembling "Lord, not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

While Margaret was wistfully, and half fearfully, looking round her, after taking the first steps into life;—elsewhere, beneath that roof, another unselfish, loving soul was about to take the first step into another state of being. The once fair Countess of Carleton was passing rapidly away from the joy and sorrows—the deep affections and the gnawing cares, of this mortal life. But her loving nature still busied itself for others.

She was alone with Miss Hastings, who sat beside the bed, and bent forward to catch her faint, though earnest tones, which seemed to grow stronger as their conversation proceeded.

"Give me your hand," she said. "So!—Now we shall understand each other better;" and a faint smile lighted up her emaciated features. "Do you remember telling me once—long ago, when we first knew each other, that you and I 'could only be friends in adversity?' You were right; but it was my fault that it was so. I should have been jealous of you—you feared that?"

"Nay!"—said Miss Hastings, "I feared that I might become envious of your happier lot."

"Does a pure love ever die?" asked Lady Carleton.

"Yes; in the same way that a pure man dies. It passes into another and a higher stage of its development. It gets rid of its earthly trammels."

"You will think me unfit to die. I still love those earthly trammels, as you call them, better than the promises of heavenly freedom; husband and children are dearer than ever to my heart!"—And the sweet face became agonised for a moment. "I am very rebellious. I cannot say 'Thy will be done.' My own human will struggles desperately at times with this coming death. I do not fear the future for myself. No! I have a calm assurance of God's everlasting love. I can trust *myself* easily to him; but with strange human inconsistency, I do not trust implicitly to him all the interests of those I love. I want to make and meddle in their future. If I have mistaken, and it is not my duty to care for these earthly concerns of those whose souls are dearer than my own—why then the great and merciful God will forgive."

“ But all appears well now, dear Lady Carleton. Your husband and children should cause you no uneasiness,” said Miss Hastings, who feared that she would become morbidly excited.

“ Listen to me, and judge!—I speak out. This is no time to soften truth. My husband’s character is not unknown to you. He is loving—he is jealous—he is steady even to obstinacy—he is ambitious and proud of his family. These qualities have strengthened with years. He loves me and Frank!—Arundel——” here she paused, and her lips quivered. “ He would be kind and good to him—but he does not understand—he does not love my poor afflicted boy!—does not build hopes on *him*! —During Arundel’s last attack he got the notion that he will never be fit for the business of the world. That, in short, he ought to be kept out of society, and that my large property, which is entailed on him, should revert to his brother, who will, of course, supply Arundel with all that is necessary for a *lunatic*.”

“ Good God !” exclaimed Miss Hastings. “ Treat Arundel as a lunatic ! This is grossly unjust, and comes from false pride in the earl !

Let him wait a few years, and see whether Arundel is a son of whom a father need be ashamed!—Treat him as a confirmed lunatic? It would be as just to deprive Lord Carleton himself of his property, and his position, and duties in the world, on the score of insanity!—If I mistake not, your son Arundel will be of more utility to his country than the generality of large landed proprietors. He is precisely one of those to whom abundant wealth should be given, for he is born to rule, and knows it; and unless his manhood belie his boyhood, he will never use his power for a selfish or narrow purpose. He is tremblingly alive to the sufferings—to what *he* calls the social and political wrongs of the lower classes. It was the concentration of his thoughts and feelings on this one subject, not the severity of his school labours at Eton, that unsettled his reason for a time. M. de Merville says that his lessons were mere pastime to him, and that while other boys took credit to themselves for construing a Greek play, Arundel was trying the strength of his half-developed intellect against the questions which occupy the great men of all countries. He visited the labouring poor, the mechanics, the trades-

people in and about Windsor and Eton ; and M. de Merville believed that he did so for the sake of acquiring a little more manual skill in certain handicrafts, as Lord Carleton had always encouraged him and his brother to do. His motives were very different ; he was conversing with them about political grievances.—Again, M. de Merville's collection of the newest works in this effervescent French philosophy was accessible to Arundel. His habit of rapid reading (for I have observed that his eye seems to take up the meaning of a page at a glance) enabled him to devour a number of encyclopædic authors—books, in a great measure, supporting the views of his arch-instructor, Rousseau, as set forth in '*Le Contrat Social*.' Then he read all that he could lay his hands on of the modern English democratic party, which is now bringing itself into notice ; and studied, as well as so young a boy could, the works of our great English revolution writers—Harrington, Sidney, Milton, and the rest.

These books heated his brain ;—and partial, eloquent, one-sided writers of our day like Godwin, together with the startling contrasts which he himself *saw* between the

good, it would be a cruel blow to find himself cast into bonds because he was afflicted in his youth with a melancholy malady. It is the surest way of bringing back and confirming that malady."

"I feel that what you say is true," said the countess. "I will, therefore, do all that lays in my power to preserve Arundel's rights as a member of society. At one-and-twenty he shall inherit the North Ashurst property."

"Perhaps Lord Carleton should exercise some control——"

"No!"—interrupted the agitated mother. "There it is! Frederick is predisposed to judge severely of Arundel. He believes, too, that he is, and will be, a mere visionary, if not a madman; and that the truest kindness would be to take away the management of this property from him, and give him a moderate income."

"Thus depriving Arundel of *life* (as he understands it)—*i.e.* as active exertion, on a large scale, for the good of others!—And thus accumulating enormous wealth in the hands of the Earl of Carleton, who desires to raise the earldom to a dukedom!"

"Ah!" said the countess, in some surprise,

“you know *that*?—I thought that secret object of ambition was concealed from all but me.”

“Once I knew all the young, raw schemes—the spiritual aspirations—the worldly ambitions of your husband. So long ago—the vision of a dukedom floated before him.”

“He is bent on realising it for Frank,” said the countess, sadly.

“And for this purpose, Arundel’s ambition—the aims of his life already developing themselves in a sphere opposed to his father’s—are to be sacrificed!”

“But he really *believes* that Arundel’s aims are those of a madman.—If they sober down or change, as I hope they will, he may think differently.”

“Lord Carleton is a Cabinet Minister. He is five-and-forty, and not likely to take new views. Will he be disposed to tolerate the new philosophy, the democratic notions of his own son? He knows that his family have ever been liable to diseases of the brain, and having feared all his life that Arundel *would* be incurably insane, he will be inclined to conclude that he is so. It is diffi-

cult for him to do otherwise.—You must, in justice to your son, give your husband no control over this property.—Be sure of this, that if Arundel finds himself becoming a victim to this fearful hereditary disease (and he is almost certain to be conscious of any change of the kind), he will himself yield up the property to those better qualified to fulfil its duties.”

“This conversation has confirmed me in the line of conduct I have adopted this morning. I have spoken to Arundel on the subject. He is most reasonable ; but started at the idea that his father feared he *might* become unfit to perform the duties of his station.”

“He should not know that !” said Miss Hastings ; “there is a germ of evil there !”

“I fear so,” said the countess. After a silence, she resumed. “I have written my last will to Frederick, on the subject of Arundel. He has always yielded the management of my poor child to me. He will not act contrary to my wish in this respect ; though he may think I have been unwise. The lawyers will receive my final orders in an hour. God bless you, dear Miss Hastings ! I feel assured, from this conversation, that while *you* live,

my boy will not want a friend who understands him, and to whom he may speak freely—who will even mediate, if necessary, between him and his father.—God bless you! I should have loved you had I allowed myself to become a frequent visitor in that sweet home of yours, where my boy found peace, and joy, and reason!—But—I am not like you—even now I cannot forget that I have enjoyed all my life the happiness that should have been yours!—and though you may forgive me, I cannot quite forgive you. We never forgive those we have injured, you know!”—And again there was an effort to smile. “Ring for them to come back, now; I cannot spare them longer!—This conversation seems to have done me good, and I really feel much revived. Perhaps, after all, this may be a false alarm.—I am decidedly better! Give me a little of that wine.”

As the thin hand held the glass to the pale lips, Lord Carleton, who had been anxiously listening for the sound of the bell, entered the room. She had purposely asked for the wine, that he might see her drink it. A flush of hope came over his face as he hastened to hold the glass for her.

“How is this?—You look better!—Has Margaret Hastings restored you to me?”

This was said in a low whisper that suits a sick chamber; and Miss Hastings, who had turned away to say a few words to Arundel and Miss Price, did not hear it.

“Where is Frank?” asked Lady Carleton, in a voice so much firmer and clearer than usual, that everybody heard the question.

“I will fetch him, mother,” said Arundel.

“Is dear Miss Price there?” she asked again. The old lady advanced to the bedside.

“God bless my darling!” she ejaculated. “You seem somewhat revived.”

“I am; where are the boys? I do not see them.”

“They are coming, my love!”—said her husband. “Here they are!” And the two boys leaned forward to kiss her. She threw an arm gently round each, and gazed at them intently, murmuring blessings.—Miss Hastings beckoned Lord Carleton aside.

“Do not be deceived. She is very near her end. This sudden revival is but momentary. Farewell!—I will not intrude on the last

scene. May God bless you, Frederick, and support you in this trying hour!"

"Farewell, Margaret! There is another world for us all. There we shall meet again, freed from the sorrowful entanglements of this!" He pressed her hand, and led her to the door of the room.

"Who is that I see outside the door?—some one in a black dress?" whispered Lady Carleton to Arundel, as he bent over her, and rested his cheek on hers. He was surprised at the quick observation of external events which this question indicated, and was delighted by it;—it seemed as if his mother were being restored to herself. For two days she had lain passively unobservant of all the trifles that took place in her apartment. It struck the boy that this favourable change might be improved by the sight of her god-daughter.

"It is Maggie, dearest mother. She came with her aunt. Would you like to see her?"

"Yes, my dear, very much!—Tell them to bring her in. *Dear little Maggie!*"

Lord Merle went to the door, and spoke a few words to his father, who immediately after-

wards led Maggie into the room. When she stood beside the bed she ventured to look up at Lady Carleton.

“ Ah ! Maggie, my dear ! so you have come to see me ! ” said the invalid, stretching out a wan hand. The young girl sunk on her knees, and covered the hand with tears and kisses. The hand moved feebly, and rested on her head.—“ God bless you, Maggie ! may you live to be such a woman as your aunt ! —Come near to me. I have a word to say.”

Maggie, in a state of suppressed agitation, rose from her knees, and bent to catch Lady Carleton’s words. No one else heard them. Whatever they were, Maggie seemed powerfully moved. She clasped her hands, and said, in a low, fervent tone, “ *I will, I will !* ”

The dying lady kissed her cheek, and Margaret was drawn away, half fainting, by Lord Carleton.

When she recovered, half an hour afterwards, she found herself being lifted by some one into a carriage—the cold, frosty air restored her thoroughly. — “ Aunt ! are you here ? Where are we going ? ”

“ We are going home, my child ! ” said her aunt, tenderly, taking her in her arms.

Maggie felt some hot tears fall on her face. She started. Her aunt—her cold, dignified aunt, was weeping.

“How is Lady Carleton?” asked Margaret.

“Did you leave her better?”

“Well! perfectly well! She will never know earthly sorrow more!”

CHAPTER IX.

THE FORTESCUES AND MR. MORTON.

"Let thy kindred and allies be welcome to thy house and table. Grace them with thy countenance, and further them in all honest actions; for by this means thou shalt so double the bond of nature as thou shalt find them so many advocates to plead an apology for thee behind thy back. Be sure to keep some great man thy friend, but trouble him not for trifles."

LORD BURLEIGH's *Advice to his Son.*

"All the delights of life, I say, would go to the deuce if people did but act upon their silly principles, and avoid those whom they dislike and abuse. Whereas, by a little charity and mutual forbearance, things are made to go on pleasantly enough."

Vanity Fair.

THE Fortescues and Mr. Morton were related to the Rabys of Carleton. Mr. Morton was the only brother of the countess, and Lady Fortescue was her only surviving sister. Six months after that lady's death, things were going on much as they did before in Raby House—as far as could be judged by the world.

The Earl of Carleton was still the most influential person in the Cabinet. He gave dinners, balls, private evenings. Lady Fortescue, a fashionable little woman, whose husband, Sir John, was one of the earl's party, presided at his balls. Lord Carleton never spoke of his wife. His health was disturbed by her death, and he was absent from business for two months; after which time he seemed to apply himself wholly to politics.

Lady Fortescue bore some resemblance to her sister. "Like all the Morton girls," old Miss Price said, "she was better than she seemed, but not half as good as she might have been." She was lively, good-natured, and rather clever. If she had higher qualities latent within her, Sir John was precisely the sort of husband not to call them forth. She was successful. She loved the world, and the world loved her. If thoughts beyond the world sometimes entered her mind and made her grave, they never stayed there long enough to make her sorrowful;—except on the death of her sister, Caroline. She played hostess at Raby House to a select party a few months after Caroline's death; but the most heartless of the guests went away with the conviction

that "Clarissa had hard work to keep down her feelings to-night!"

By the most heartless of the guests, I mean to indicate Lady Fortescue's brother, Mr. Morton.—A heartless man does not mean a man without a heart—one who has given it all away to another, and remains without any for himself—that is, as all the world agrees, a witless, senseless man. No!—a heartless man means one who keeps his heart, with all its feelings and emotions, for his own private advantage. Such a man was Henry Morton—formerly the well-behaved school and college companion of his cousin, the Earl of Carleton, now Mr. Morton, M.P., his brother-in-law—heir-at-law to North Ashurst, and sole guardian of his nephew, Sir Willoughby Morton—the richest young baronet in the three kingdoms. It seems somewhat beside the mark to tell you of a man's connexions when I wish to convey an idea of the man himself, but I have insensibly fallen into the usual fashion in describing Mr. Morton. Yet Mr. Morton was by no means an insignificant person—a mere cipher—good for nothing but to swell the total of the figures which it follows; he had plenty of brains—a craving for distinction—and a conscience neither over nice nor

over wise. In short, he was about the last man in the world to be characterised as a mere nobody, or as

—“that sort of tool
Which knaves do work with called a fool.”

Why, then, was it that the world valued Mr. Morton more for the sake of his brother-in-law and his nephew than for his own sake?—Simply because Mr. Morton did so himself.

Mr. Morton had, besides the usual minor ones, two master vices, both utterly destructive of true dignity of character.—I am by no means blind to the fact—that a thoroughly *brave* man is a very rare creature—and a man utterly free from vanity still rarer; but Mr. Morton had more vanity than most men of his intellectual calibre, and less moral bravery. He was born with a clear, searching, sharp intelligence, which enabled him to see through the generality of men, and despise them. But he was also born with an inordinate love of admiration, and a dastardly fear of the world. He was

“most contemptible to shun contempt.”

Vanity and moral cowardice kept up a perpetual struggle in his breast—the one prompting him to do “deeds of high emprise,” for the

sake of the praise of man;—and the other withholding him from the attempt, by the fear of exciting the enmity of those whom he must oppose, in order to succeed ; and by the fear of complete failure.

By the time he was thirty he understood himself better than most of us do ; and when he came to that sorry understanding he was not a whit the better for it. The Platonic axiom “know thyself” when put into action, neither increased his wisdom nor his happiness. He saw nothing better for it than to go on doing, upon principle, what he had in youth done upon impulse—viz., to use all the cleverness of his head to cover the civil war always raging in his heart. He had a hard life of it. I never saw a man upon whose countenance care and bitterness had more distinctly set their seal. He loved no one, and I never heard of any one who loved him, except one poor woman who was his mistress for five years—during a period of his life when he considered it necessary for his credit with the Prince’s party to keep a mistress. When the order of the day was changed, and with it Mr. Morton, he put down what was to him a useless encumbrance. It had never

had the charm of a forbidden luxury, a pleasant immorality,—for he was unsensual, and though his vanity was gratified by the disinterested affection of this woman, it was not in his nature to give her an atom of love in return. When he turned her off, she went from him stupefied at his heartlessness, and poisoned herself.

“Why she didn’t poison *him* instead of herself,” said his cousin, Lord Carleton, in speaking of the affair at the time with another young man, “is the thing that puzzles me!—But it’s in the nature of women to sacrifice themselves on bad altars as well as good. Sacrificed to Henry! Poor Mary King! Unlike the Jews and the Mohammedans, I would thank God for making me a woman—ay, such a poor outcast as this girl!—rather than such a man as my precious cousin!”

Thus spake the Earl of Carleton at two-and-twenty.—At five-and-forty, he and his precious cousin (now his brother-in-law) were on very good terms, as the world thought.—Mr. Morton’s talent for diplomacy and finance was well known, and the earl availed himself of it; giving in return the semblance of his friend-

ship. This was useful in many important ways to Mr. Morton.

One word as to his outward man :—Mr. Morton was studiously polished in manner—in person he was tall, thin, handsome, and aristocratic ; with a quick glance of the eye, and a weak, conceited, yet implacable jaw. The mouth was small, clever—mobile, and decidedly dishonest ; the upper lip was too long. It was a mouth made for lying, flattery, and sarcasm. The nose was aquiline and handsome, but rather too large, though not sufficiently so to give weakness to the face. The forehead was narrow and high—the hair of a good brown—abundant, and fine in quality. The complexion, originally of a beautiful white and red—like his sister's, had become of a pale drab hue, which women thought was the effect of ill-health and over study. It was only the effect of the evil feelings secretly and constantly at war in his heart ; they had made him bilious and ill-tempered.

He was like the portraits of the men of the golden age of good Queen Bess, and he was vain of this resemblance. When every one wore powder and a smooth chin he ventured to go about with short curled hair and a

pointed beard. This audacity met with its reward in time. Many a pretty woman who believed that no man could be anything but frightful without powder and a queue, made an exception in favour of Mr. Morton.

"That strange style is really becoming to him!"—"There is something quite picturesque about it."—"He looks like a courtier of the Elizabethan age."—"Really his head has quite a poetic look!"—"A very interesting, thoughtful face!"—"How cleverly he talks, too—so much wit and sarcasm!"—"I dare say he is a poet!"—Thus the female fashionables judged of Mr. Morton's face. It had some characteristics of the Elizabethan age, for it was astute, shrewd, and grave with the wisdom of this world.—Mr. Morton at three-and-forty was still a bachelor. He rejoiced in the possession of the implicit confidence and boundless admiration of the wild-goose Sir Willoughby Morton, his nephew and ward. It was a beautiful thing, some people thought, to see the affection which subsisted between them.—Mr. Morton was a favourite with young men of the wealthier sort—in spite of his want of animal spirits and his worldly wisdom—for he could assume

the one and lay aside the appearance of the other at will. He had the *entrée* of the best houses; and in virtue of his highly eligible ward, he could have obtained anything that depended on the votes of the mothers and daughters of the fashionable world. Lady Fortescue was proud of her brother, and fond enough of him to be unsuspicious when he made use of her for his private ends. The good-natured little woman was the tool of both brother and husband.

One morning when Mr. Morton was staying on a visit with the Fortescues, in Berkeley-square (a circumstance of frequent occurrence, as that gentleman found his sister's house more convenient, in many respects, than an hotel), the liveliness of the family breakfast-party was somewhat checked by Sir John's dashing down the newspaper, with the exclamation,

“The Duke of Alderney is dead!”

Sir John and Mr. Morton exchanged sad, rueful looks. Let it not be supposed that they mourned for the loss of a beloved friend. No! It was by the duke's interest they had both been returned to Parliament;—failing which interest, they expected to be turned out.

“The Duke of Alderney dead !” exclaimed Lady Fortescue. “Why he was perfectly well yesterday !—I met him riding in the Kensington-road, with those two beautiful little girls of his. Where’s the paper ?” She took it from beneath her husband’s hand and read the report of the sudden death of his Grace the Duke of Alderney. His horse ran away with him on the previous evening, and threw him head foremost on a heap of stones. He was taken up lifeless.

Poor Lady Fortescue was so moved by the account of this sad misfortune, and the thought of the now completely orphan state of the duke’s two girls, that her pretty face was distorted with weeping.

“What a shocking thing, John !” And she appealed for sympathy to her husband. He stretched out his hand good-naturedly to her.

“Why, Clarissa, what makes you take it to heart so ?”

She pressed the hard, white, gentlemanly hand.—“Good Heavens, John ! To think of any one we know so well—that I exchanged laughing words with yesterday—being carried off so suddenly ! And his two sweet girls—quite orphans now !”

"Oh ! they are capitally provided for, my dear—20,000*l.* a year, each."

"But who will provide them with a father's affection, John ?" said his wife, half indignant at him for talking so lightly. "Suppose it had been yourself ?" And the poor little woman shuddered.

"Now, Clarissa, don't work yourself up to tragedy pitch. Just listen to me, my dear. You must not be absorbed in your own feelings on this occasion. Think of what your brother-in-law must feel. Lord Carleton and the duke were not only political allies, but relations—second cousins, you know, and intimate friends from boyhood."

"Ah, yes ! I had forgotten ! Frederick and the duke were really attached to each other. This blow must fall severely on him. I had better drive to St. James's-square as soon as possible, and see how he is. Will you ring the bell, Henry, and order the carriage ?"

"That is acting like a sensible woman. I will call at Raby House on my way from the Treasury, and we can come back together. You will probably hear from Carleton how the duke has left his property," said the careful husband.

“I will inquire.—Now the Marquis of St. Ann’s is dead, I suppose the dukedom of Alderney is extinct. It is a thousand pities that there are only those two girls!” sighed the good-natured Lady Fortescue, who really took an interest in her neighbour’s concerns, without any ulterior hope of benefiting her own.

“The dukedom might be revived in favour of a proper claimant, perhaps. Carleton was the duke’s second cousin. Again, Lady Geraldine, or Lady Alice Trevor’s husband, would have a good claim, if of sufficiently noble descent. You will, probably, hear who is appointed their guardian.”

“Oh, Lord Carleton, I should fancy.”

“Not at all unlikely!”

“And then if the young viscount and one of the Ladies Trevor—a very proper match! —Why, they would unite the two claims to the dukedom! You said something about Carleton’s wishing for a dukedom the other day.—Your notions always have something in them!”

“*Ah ! vous dites cela !* You are really too flattering!” said her husband, laughing. “But your female wit has put my crude notion into

a definite form, long before I should have done so myself. Besides—to tell you a secret, Clarissa, I do not think Carleton would like to merge his old earldom—with its time-honored associations—in the comparatively modern Dukedom of Alderney. Why should he not change the earldom for the dukedom of Carleton? And by marrying the eldest of these girls to his second boy, he might obtain a revival of the Alderney title for him.”

“What! and make both his sons dukes? Ah! poor Caroline always said Frederick was ambitious!—That would be a clever piece of management? Don’t you think so, Henry?”

“It sounds very well—as well as if it were in a book;—but, my dear sister, do not let the idea of the two dukedoms make you forget that the bereaved friend is awaiting your condolences—and that Johnson announced the carriage five minutes ago.—Good morning!—Yes, I will dine with you to-day. Shall I bring Willoughby?—Oh! Clarissa, find out, if you can, why Lord Carleton’s carriage is so often at the gate of a house in Brompton. I have seen it there three times this week—I insinuate no scandal. But the charming retreat is tenanted by a lady.”

"Really, you are too clever, Henry!" said Lady Fortescue, smiling. "Frederick is not quite so bad as some of you wretches of men. It's very hard that he cannot go to a private lunatic asylum of Dr. Ward's, where his son was confined last year, without being suspected of such things. The house belongs to a maiden lady that Dr. Ward was just going to marry, when he died."

"Is Dr. Ward's *fiancée* a beautiful girl with magnificent auburn ringlets?"

"I really will not listen to anything you have to say!" And the indignant lady retreated from the room.

"Never fear; you will hear all about the auburn ringlets when she comes back!" said Sir John, turning over the newspaper—"that is, if it's all *correct*. And if it were not, I don't suppose the thing would interest you. What do you suspect? Not a second marriage just yet? Carleton cared for that good little wife of his."

"Ah! but he cared for somebody else first."

"*Et l'on revient toujours à ses premières amours*, eh?—Is the lady of the auburn ringlets compatible with the chronology of these anti-matrimonial *amours*?"

"As the *amorosa* herself, No ; as the *result* of the amour, Yes."

"You are wrong, depend upon it, Morton."

"Why do you say so ?"

"Because I know the man."

"Pshaw ! we know nobody !—I shall call in St. James's-square about your time, and we may both come back with Clarissa."

Three hours later, Sir John handed his wife into the carriage at the portico of Raby House, he stepped in after her, and Mr. Morton followed.

"Well, my dear," said Sir John, kindly, "you have had but a sad visit."

"Yes ; the sight of those poor Trevor girls was almost too much for me !—Frederick took Miss Price with him last night, and fetched them away from Alderney House. He is appointed guardian ; and they are not to marry without his consent. For the next five years—until Lady Alice is twenty and Lady Geraldine eighteen, they are to live with their aunt, old Lady Glengarry. After that time, Lord Carleton assumes the entire control over them ; and in case of his death, who do you think is to be their guardian ?—

You will never guess ! Why *you—mon respectable frère !*—You do not seem surprised.”

“ I am a bad actor, you know. To say the truth, I was aware of the duke’s intention long ago.”

“ That’s a lie !” thought Sir John Fortescue. He was right. Mr. Morton was as much surprised at this reversion of the dignity of guardian to the heiresses expectant of the ducal house of Alderney, as his brother and sister.

“ I can’t think what puts it into people’s heads to make a bachelor like you guardian to their children !” said Lady Fortescue.

“ Oh ! his character for integrity and prudence, of course !” replied her husband.

“ Yes, it must be that,” said Lady Fortescue, sinking back in her corner.

But she was not to repose yet. “ Who was that stately dame in black that was talking to you and Carleton ?” asked Sir John. “ I did not catch her name, but I thought I recognised the face.”

“ That is Miss Hastings, sister of Frederick’s friend, the rector of Carleton. And”—turning to her brother—“ the owner of the

pretty place at Brompton that excited your suspicion. I have been confounding her story with somebody else's. She is the——"

"Mother of the auburn ringlets, eh?"

"Did I not say *Miss Hastings*? You are insupportable! No! she is aunt to Sophia Hastings, of the auburn locks."

"Exactly so!" said Mr. Morton; "and Lord Carleton takes great interest in the aunt and niece?"

"He does; he was present at Miss Sophia's marriage yesterday to young Russell, his under-secretary. He gave her away, and her father performed the ceremony."

"Oh! does the rector of Carleton call himself father to that beautiful girl?"

"Well, I acknowledge she is beautiful, though her hair is a flagrant red!" said the lady, with spirit.

Her husband laughed; her brother smiled a little. "You shall call it by what name you please; but I am afraid you will find that she is accustomed to think it her very best point. Now, your girls, Clarissa, have such splendid complexions, that their hair——"

"It is not so red as your new beauty's!" interrupted the mother.

"No, my dear, that is its defect. It is too yellow," said Morton.

"Don't tease her about the girls' hair! Don't fret about such a trifle, Clarry! If they can't get husbands here on account of their red hair, we will take them to Spain, where this defect will be their greatest charm. In the eyes of the *Hidalgos*, red hair, you know, is a mark of pure Gothic blood, and is the greatest beauty a woman can have."

"Clarissa, I promise you that when I am Premier, Fortescue shall have the embassy to Madrid.—I can't do more than *that* for my red-haired nieces!"

"If I were Premier, you should have an embassy to Coventry!" said Lady Fortescue, without a grain of bitterness. She really liked her disagreeable brother.

CHAPTER X.

AN EVENING AT RABY HOUSE—MARGARET'S FIRST SIGHT OF THE
FASHIONABLE WORLD.

——“ We shall come too late.

Romeo. I fear, too early : for my mind misgives,
Some consequence, yet hanging in the stars,
Shall bitterly begin his fearful date
With this night's revels.”

Romeo and Juliet.

“ An uninitiated man cannot take upon himself to portray the
great world accurately, and had best keep his opinions to himself,
whatever they are.”

Vanity Fair.

“ Notes with many a winding bout
Of linked sweetness long drawn out,
With wanton heed and giddy cunning,
The melting voice through mazes running—
Untwisting all the chains that tie,
The hidden soul of harmony.”

L' Allegro.

Do my readers remember that I have mentioned the family of the Greys—the Greys of Langford Grange, near Carleton ? Mrs. Grey was present at my aunt Margaret's christen-

.

ing, and poured a flood of provincial scandal upon Miss Price. Then, there was my grandfather's pupil, her son William, surnamed Brutus by my aunt, and his elder brother, a captain in the Guards. There was his sister, the showy, accomplished Carlotta, and the *père de famille*, John Grey, Esq.—The Greys were a good old county family, perfectly well connected, given to hospitality, and to thinking of themselves a great deal more highly than they ought to think,—after the manner of narrow-minded people everywhere, and of the country gentry especially, in our land of prejudice, pretension, and property qualifications.

Carlotta Grey and Sophia Hastings had formed a violent friendship, based on a certain similarity in character, and a marked difference in personal appearance. Sophia was really pretty, with regular features, and an elegant figure. Carlotta, on the contrary, was not pretty, nor very winning, but extremely dashing. She had a large figure; indeed, fastidious persons said it was too large; but as Miss Carlotta had no misgivings on the subject herself, and bared her huge white shoulders in the most intrepid style—

challenging, as it were, all the county to produce anything finer in that line—all the county took her at her own valuation, and pronounced her to be “a monstrous fine woman,” or as the equally elegant phrase of our day is, “*a stunner*.” In temperament, Carlotta was active and jovial; Sophia, lazy and sentimental; in conversation, Sophia displayed the English talent for silence, while Carlotta piqued herself upon talking with fashionable volubility “a leash of languages at once.” She had been six months in Paris, and had “swum in a gondola,” on the strength of which she displayed her knowledge of French and Italian as confidently as she exhibited her neck and shoulders.

The grand desire of both these young ladies was to become women of fashion; Carlotta had better prospects than Sophia, and generously promised to forward her friend’s interests in the world. I may as well add, that their friendship was knit more closely together by mutual confidences touching certain fancies which invaded their girlish repose at the age of sixteen. Sophia had a *penchant* for the handsome Lord Merle, and Carlotta nourished in heart something like love for

Sophia's brother, "gentle Jamie." They talked together of these affairs, and advised and pitied one another; but after a year or two, they began to take a practical view of life, and were a little ashamed of having been so foolish. Carlotta spent a season in London, and in the following autumn a great banker, who was about to buy an estate near the Greys, and who wanted Mr. Grey's interest to return him for the county, came down on a visit to Langford Grange, and proposed for Carlotta. Mr. Harrington was forty years old, and wore a wig. Carlotta was not twenty, and had shadowy hopes that "gentle Jamie" might awake some day to a sense of her charms. But then she had waited three years for the fulfilment of those hopes, and even Sophia thought nothing would come of it. Mr. Harrington was handsome, *malgré ses quarante ans*, and had a fine house in Cavendish-square, and a park in Surrey—and was going to buy the Bloomfield estate, and be member for the county.

"So, upon the whole, Sophy, my child," said the bouncing belle to her bosom friend, "I think I shall oblige papa and mamma and marry him!—What's the use of making a fuss

not wait more than a quarter of an hour longer!—What time is it now, William?"

A large, heavy young man, who looked like a well-padded guardsman buttoned up by mistake in a clerical coat, proceeded to draw out a watch of the period from its abiding-place. The act was certainly not rapidly performed.

"How slow you are, William! Is it half-past nine yet?"

"No, Carlotta, it is exactly five-and-twenty minutes past nine, by the Guards."

"And Lady Fortescue told us not to be late, or we should miss the *entrée* of the Prince and the royal Dukes! If she were not *your* sister, Sophia, I really would not wait!"

"I dare say it is not her fault. She never was behindhand formerly," said Mr. William Grey, yawning, and then settling his cravat.

"Ah, *juste ciel*! There is a carriage at last!—It must be Margaret!—Are you quite ready, Sophia?—William, just knock at Mr. Harrington's door, and say we are going, and that I expect him to come home with us."

William's long legs had scarcely measured the space from the fireplace to the door, when he was met face to face by some one entering hurriedly. This event seemed to put

his sister's commission out of his head. It was young Margaret Hastings.

"I am very sorry, Mrs. Harrington ; but something unexpected happened before I came out, and I could not leave my aunt."

"Nothing unpleasant, I hope, my dear ?"

"Oh, no !" And Margaret smiled, as if the matter were the reverse of unpleasant.

"Let me see your dress, child !" said Mrs. Russell, with some anxiety.

Margaret dropped the cloak that covered her, and revealed a dress that gave a severe shock to her sister.

"Plain India muslin, with a blue sash and sleeves, tied up with blue ribbon ! Your hair not even frizzed and curled ! What does my aunt mean by sending you to your first ball—a ball at Raby House—where the very first people in the kingdom will be, dressed in that trim ?"

Margaret coloured. "I am very sorry, Sophia, but the fact is, the dressmaker, who had a very pretty rose-coloured brocaded silk to make for me, entirely forgot the order, and sent to say so, to-day, just in time for Audrey to prepare this old dress.—I was very vexed, you may be sure, but it was no use sitting down to

cry over it; and as I really want to see a dozen famous men who will be at Raby House to-night, I preferred going in my old frock to not going at all;—especially as my aunt said it was not likely *you* would care very much about my dress in so great a crowd. Nobody knows me, you know.”

Mrs. Harrington put on the cloak again, and said, patting Margaret on the shoulder, “*C'est inconcevable!* You are a strange creature!—If the wretch of a dressmaker had served me such a trick——”

“You would have trimmed her jacket nicely, I am sure!” said her brother.

Margaret turned round, and laughed at the sight of her old friend.—“Ah! Brutus! I beg your pardon—Mr. William Grey—how do you do?” And she put out one of the round, white arms from beneath the cloak. He took her hand in his, held it for a moment, blushed, stammered, tried to laugh, and dropped it. At this moment a servant announced that the carriage was waiting, and they lost no time in going to it. In St. James’s-square they fell into the string of carriages making their way to Raby House, and were set down in their

turn. William Grey drew Margaret's arm within his as they stood in the hall, saying,

"Never mind your sister!—Carlotta will take care of her. She's as good as a man! Besides, they are both used to these affairs, and you are not.—Don't be afraid! Here, I'll get rid of your cloak."

Freed from that incumbrance, Margaret's arm went back very comfortably within that of her huge friend; and seeing Mrs. Harrington and Mrs. Russell close before her, she was quite at ease, and her brown eyes glanced brightly about as she was lead through the thronged vestibule and up the spacious staircase.—Her thoughts went back involuntarily to the only time she had ever been there before. How different it all looked! In place of the dim light—the whispering servants—the air of depression and sorrowful anticipation, there was a blaze of splendour in the hall—gorgeous exotics sent a rich perfume into the warm air, from either side, while in the centre moved groups of magnificently-dressed men and women. Jewels, feathers, and silks of rainbow hues glittered, waved, and rustled on all sides—soft voices and low silvery laughter came confusedly on her ear.

"You are very fortunate, Margaret!" said Mrs. Harrington, turning to adjust her train. "There was a Drawing Room to-day, and so the men as well as the women are *en grande toilette* to-night. *Ciel!* Look at the jewels in that sword-hilt!"

"Who is that gentleman in the military uniform?—there! smiling to that beautiful lady?" asked Margaret, fixing her eyes on a noticeable man who stood in the centre of a group near them.

"That's the Duke of Wellington! That's Lady S——. She's reckoned a great beauty, you know!" said Mr. William Grey, looking at Margaret to see how much Court scandal she knew.

"I should think so, indeed! What a graceful, lovely creature! What a sweet melancholy in her smile! I am sure she does not spend much time in the fashionable world!—She looks above this earth!"

William Grey appeared to be much amused at this speech, and when Margaret requested to know why he laughed at her, the only reply she elicited was,

"Bless your innocence! That's what *you* see in her pretty face is it?"

Here Carlotta turned again.—“Well, Margaret! isn’t the duke a handsome man?”

“The Duke of Wellington? Oh dear, no! I don’t think him at all *handsome*; but he has a powerful face. I’m satisfied with him.”

“Oh! the duke will do—will he?” said some one close to Margaret’s elbow.—It was her brother James, who had been waiting in the hall for the last hour, expecting the arrival of this party.—“You must not express your opinions quite so freely here. People have wonderfully quick ears.—How is my aunt? How are you, darling?” he added, in a lower whisper. “*Well*, I see. But”—looking at her dress—“what is this?”

“The pretty silk frock you gave me, dear!—I knew you would be disappointed!—almost as much as I was—but I’ll tell you all about it another time. It could not be helped. Now I see how very splendid the ladies are, I regret it less than I did; for it would have been quite overlooked. I intend to produce a grand effect with my rose-coloured brocade and a train!—You shall see me wear it on some other occasion where it will not be lost among more showy dresses.”

They were just at the foot of the staircase,

and Margaret was thinking that it would be very pleasant if William Grey would go away and leave her and James together, when she observed a handsome face smiling down from the first landing-place upon James and herself.—A movement in the crowd showed her the whole figure. It was that of a strikingly handsome young man, in a Court-dress.

“Look, James! Is not that Frank—I mean Lord Merle? He seems to be wanting to speak to you.”

Her brother looked up; and the two friends exchanged glad telegraphic signs.

“What does he mean by all those movements?” said Margaret.

“He wants us to be as quick as we can; in ten minutes Catalani is going to sing, and he thinks you will be delighted to hear her. He is going to wait where he is till we come. He was with me down here for a long time watching for you all; but he was obliged to go back to his father and Lady Fortescue, and I promised to pioneer your party to the saloon as soon as you arrived. However, he has become impatient, I see, and has got half-way down stairs again.”

“Dear Frank!” said Margaret, “how hand-

some he is ! and how fond he seems of you ! I hardly knew him in that fine dress."

"My dear Margaret, let me caution you again. Remember the difference of rank and sex—*Lord Merle*—no more Frank. It is not the usual style, and would be misunderstood," said James, gently.—"You must learn to attend to these things."

"Thank you, dear!" said Margaret; "I forget terribly all about proprieties. I hate every new propriety I hear of, and love all my old improprieties! I suppose"—and she gave a bright, sly glance sideways—"I may not call him 'Brutus' any more?—Yet he is just as delightfully dense as ever;—and I don't feel the slightest inclination to be distant and polite.—I wish I were not seventeen!—I don't half like growing into a woman. I may not say anything that is natural."

James smiled affectionately. "You may say all you like to me, dear, and to Merle too; only give him his title."

"How do you do?" And they stopped while Carlotta and Sophia spoke to some acquaintances. "Ah! Sir Willoughby!—I thought you were in Paris."

The extravagantly-dressed dandy thus ad-

dressed replied, "I was ;—only nunky sent for me.—He thought this affair would be a complete failure unless I graced it with my presence ; and as I thought certain fair ladies here might languish for my smile, why I braved the perils of the deep yesterday, and arrived *tout épuisé* at Dover last night, and suffered *la peine forte et dure* in that horrid machine, a post-chaise, all this morning. Fact ! isn't it, uncle ?"

The person thus appealed to was a striking-looking man, plainly dressed, with a short, pointed beard, and unpowdered hair.—Margaret was much puzzled by his face. It reminded her of some one she knew, but she did not recollect who, at the moment. He laughed, with what she thought unjustifiable good-nature, at his nephew's foolish chatter. In the midst of his laughing declaration that "really Willoughby deserved the crown of martyrdom," he caught her searching eyes fixed on his face, and appeared to be taken *aback* for a moment. Then, suddenly recollecting himself, he greeted her two companions with marked cordiality.

"Ah ! Mr. James Hastings !—It's not often I have the pleasure of seeing you now !—Mr.

Grey, too! My dear fellow, I'm delighted to see you!—My brother-in-law will turn from many a town acquaintance to shake hands with such a familiar country friend."—His brother-in-law scarcely remembered the existence of this familiar country friend; but the unsuspecting Grey took the diplomatist *au pied de lettre*; and was as pleased as if he really had received a shake of the hand from the minister.

Mr. Morton saw at a glance that Mrs. Harrington and Mrs. Russell had no older women with them, and only "two boys" as escort; he therefore coolly arranged matters to suit himself and his nephew.

"Mrs. Harrington," he said, "you will never get to my sister at this rate!—Will you take my arm? Willoughby, if you are not too fatigued, give your arm to Mrs. Russell; Grey and Hastings will take charge of the young lady.—And now follow, steadily!"—The rest was addressed to Mrs. Harrington, in a low, familiar whisper. "You and I are the best pioneers. I think you understand the principle of progress. Never let any one jostle you out of the ground you have gained. Forward! forward! No retreat. Never give ground for an instant! Bear on gently; insinuate yourself

softly and politely.—There ! now we have ample space !—Who is the little girl with the brown eyes ? Sister of Mrs. Russell ?—Why is she dressed *en enfant* ? To make the fair Sophia seem younger ?”

“ Oh dear, no !—Sophia does not need that. I think Margaret looks quite as old as Sophia. Sophia has a particularly young look !”

“ Silly women, with small features and good skins, always have. Mrs. Russell will look like an old *girl* at forty—not like a mature woman. That sister, with the eyes and the school-girl costume, has got more of the woman already in her look.”

“ What, that little unformed thing ! And Sophia, you said the other night, was a complete woman of fashion, and one of the handsomest creatures in town ! I don’t understand you. I thought you admired my friend.”

“ Sometimes ! But I generally prefer something more *prononcée* than Mrs. Russell, and something less plain and provincial than her sister.” And his false mouth smiled approval on the comely Mrs. Harrington. She tapped his arm with her fan, and said, “ *Dites cela aux Anglais !*” He looked at her impressively ;

—and then began to inquire about the best time for catching Mr. Harrington at home.

Sophia and Sir Willoughby Morton were talking near them, and gazing at intervals on the stream of fine people who passed by, talking of themselves, their acquaintances, and trifles of the hour, just as other people not so fine talk of the petty interests of *their* daily life. The exceptions in each class are a small minority.

“Did you really come over because you thought Carlotta and I should be here?”

“’Pon honour! Only *you* put Carlotta in. I didn’t, ’pon honour!”

Sophia simpered something to the effect that he was “a sad flatterer,” and then earnestly begged him to tell her whether her train was long enough, and if her sleeves were of the veritable latest mode. Sir Willoughby was a high authority on these matters, and would not peril his judgment on such important points until he had seen them at a distance.

“How can I judge of the train until you dance? or of the cut of the sleeves either? As to the *matériel*, you may set your heart at ease. Madame Récamier wore a *robe* of lute-

string, *moiré*, *bleu de ciel*, exactly like yours, with necklace and bracelets of pearls, at the Hotel de ——."

"You don't say so?" said the fair Sophia; and her blue eyes danced with joy, while a soft blush of vanity overspread her cheek, and her beauty became radiant—her deepest feelings had been gratified. "*Her* dress like Madame Récamier's!"

"'Pon honour, Mrs. Russell!—And really, though she is a divine creature, she did not look so well as you do to-night. *Parole d'honneur!* you are looking wonderfully well to-night!—Uncle, isn't Mrs. Russell looking beyond—quite——"

"*Oltre le più belle bella*, do you mean?" asked the polite Mr. Morton. "Leave you alone for making an original remark!"

"Willoughby, will you be good enough to conduct Mrs. Harrington to Lady Fortescue before Catalani begins?—Mrs. Russell, allow me!"—And the next moment Sophia was being led onwards by Lord Merle.

Sir Willoughby was obliged to follow with Carlotta, for Mr. Morton was arrested by a personage of importance, and they lost sight of him.

James Hastings smiled quietly, and William Grey brightened up, and said, "What an uncommonly clever fellow Lord Merle is!—When he wants to have a thing done, he does it!"

"Yes," said Margaret. "He does not wait to see whether it will do itself.—But I don't understand how this remark applies, now?"

"Why, he didn't want us to be kept shilly shally here.—He wanted to get rid of that Mr. Morton (monstrous clever fellow, Miss Margaret; but Lord Merle hates him!)—and he wanted to get your sister away from that confounded puppy, Sir Willoughby. Sophia, you know——"

Here he was interrupted by the stoppage of their party at the entrance of the saloon, where Lord Carleton was standing to receive his guests.

To casual observers, Lord Carleton did not appear to be altered since his wife's death.—As Margaret saw him now,—with every advantage of costume and the excitement of society, she was surprised to find how little she had before observed the noble presence and stately bearing of the man. The features were more strongly marked than formerly, and there

were lines about the mouth, and a few perpendicular wrinkles in the forehead, which showed that though he was smiling now, the habitual expression of the face was stern rather than melancholy, and sorrowful rather than gentle. His hair had fallen away from the temples, and what remained of those once abundant locks, was almost white; but the fashion of wearing powder hid the change, and as his figure was still graceful—unbent, as well proportioned as ever, and full of vigour and activity, the Earl of Carleton at fifty-four years of age was pronounced, by most men and all women, a very handsome man.—Margaret could not help admiring the stately, accomplished gentleman, who bent so politely over Mrs. Harrington's hand, and then over that of Sophia. The fine dress, the courtly manner, and the changed expression of face, saddened her. She thought of the days when she had seen him stretched on the sofa in the countess's *boudoir*, chatting and laughing with the sweet wife who sat on the low seat beside him.—It was an unlucky thought, for it brought the tears into Margaret's eyes, and they were glistening there when Lord Carleton looked at her.—He half

started ;—the courteous, pleasant smile passed away from his lips, and he pressed them firmly together for a moment. Probably the sight of her young face recalled the past too forcibly to his mind.—He took her hand ; it trembled with the emotion she was endeavouring to suppress, and it was in vain he tried to smile once more, and repeat the kind compliments he was wont to address to young girls. He could only press her hand convulsively (the marks of his fingers were visible when she drew her glove off), while he murmured, “God bless you, Maggie !” and then turned away.—He coughed, took out his handkerchief, and the next moment was talking in Spanish with the ambassador of his Catholic Majesty, as composedly, and with as stately an air, as if he had been a Spaniard himself. No one seemed to have observed anything peculiar in the earl’s manner. The crowd increased every moment, and the sound of music rose and fell, while the buzz of conversation was becoming as loud as aristocratic propriety permitted.

Margaret turned her eyes away from the earl, and looked for her companions.—They had moved a few steps further into the room

to the spot where Lady Fortescue was seated in state, with the dowagers and dames of the greatest credit and renown ; but the guests clustered so thickly there, that she could not see them.—She was looking about in search of her friends, when she felt some one take her hand, and draw it through his arm, pressing it gently as he did so.

“ I will take you to James and Sophia ; they are just here ! ”—A tall young man, plainly dressed, but distinguished by his remarkably graceful bearing, stood beside her.

“ Is it Arundel ? ” she asked, half doubtfully. “ Ah ! I have been looking for you ever since we came ! My aunt told me you were returned from Germany, and would be here to-night. How was it I did not see you ? ”

“ You were occupied with my father.—I was standing beside him then, Maggie, but you did not see me !—your eyes were in your heart ! ” He pressed her hand again. “ Stop a minute, and let this mob go by. Oh ! what a blessing it is to look on some one who is *not* changed ! You are, I see, I know, I feel, the same dear, kind, darling girl that used to run

about with me in the old garden at the Rectory, and play at hide-and-seek at the Castle, and write Latin verses (with occasional eccentricities as to quantity) under the walnut-tree in the paddock—I think you *climbed* that tree once!—I know you vowed you would!”—And Arundel’s eyes gleamed with a mixture of drollery and regret. “Well, well! I won’t ’peach! but there are certain escapades and adventures in woods and fields and streams, well known to me; which, if I could make equally well known to this fair assembled company, would damage your chance in the matrimonial market, I can tell you, Miss Maggie!—A damsel of such a bold, adventurous spirit, who rides a horse without a saddle—who presumes to think for herself, and has a will of her own—who knows more Latin than half of the Imperial Parliament, and could even puzzle *some* of the bench of bishops in Greek, if she has not forgotten the little I once taught her—such a damsel would strike terror into the breasts of *those* three elegant young men, and *those* two *ci-devant* young ones—even of the bold dandy, Sir Willoughby Morton, who is making such an egregious

fool of himself at this precise moment. Look at him, simpering at Sophia !—What are you thinking of, Maggie ? You look grave, not to say severe.”

“ Do I ?—Why do you talk to me in this way ? Sir Willoughby Morton does not interest me—nor what you call the matrimonial market !”

“ Sententious and snubbing !—I thought you were become a polite young lady, now you are *out*.—But I forgive you !”

“ For rewarding you according to your deserts ?”

“ You will have the last word !”

“ Is it not the prerogative of my sex ?—I am glad to see Lord Carleton look so well, and Lord Merle too. Is it Oxford, or full-dress, that has improved him so much ?”

“ Merle ? Improved ? Perhaps he is ! but I am slow to perceive any improvement in those I love. Merle is always the same in my eyes. I have met with no one to compare with him !” And the large liquid blue eyes, dusky as violets, glanced fondly towards his brother.

“ Not in your German university ?” asked Maggie.

Arundel laughed. "Oh, there is nothing in any German university to compare with my brother, I assure you!—Not being accustomed to the sight of humanity in *that* stage of development," pointing to the fine figure of Lord Merle, "my fellow-students would have erected altars to him had he been there. They would have mistaken him for an avatar of Apollo."

"And what did the German students think of *you*?" inquired Margaret.

"I never gave myself the trouble to inquire. I was too busy. I had a great deal to learn, but was cut short in the midst."

"My aunt thought you were over-working yourself. It was she who advised Lord Carleton to send for you home; he has been so occupied with public business that he might have neglected to do so."

"And *you* urged her to do it, I hear?" Arundel's beautiful eyes looked directly into Margaret's. Hers were too honest to look a lie.

"We were afraid you would make yourself ill, Arundel! We could not bear the idea of your being ill in a strange country!—Are you angry with us?"

"You are very kind, Maggie!—and so is your aunt!" said her companion, in a low, moody tone. "I really believe you have affection for me, both of you!—and therefore I cannot but be grateful for this interference in my affairs; but it was very disagreeable to me to return so soon. You misapprehended matters. I was well—perfectly well."

"What are you two talking so gravely about?" inquired Lord Merle, joining them. His smile acted like sunshine, his voice like music, upon his brother.

"I was behaving like a fool!" he replied. "Regretting the thing that is irrevocable."

Lord Merle's ingenuous face wore an uneasy expression for a moment, as he looked from one to the other. "Come, come! We must have no retrospections on a night like this.—Do not let him talk to you about early days, Miss Margaret!—Rather go and listen to Catalani, who is about to sing.—I don't think my father wants us just now. Let us have a little bit of unqualified bliss!—I've been arranging it with James. Mrs. Harrington and Mrs. Russell are with Lady Fortescue and the *crème de la crème*. My uncle Mor-

ton and Willoughby are in attendance on them. They are all perfectly contented; for, as everybody comes to pay respects to Lady Fortescue, they see everybody, and are not likely to vacate their present post.—They missed you, Miss Margaret, and James was despatched to look for you. I advised that when you were found, he should take you into the music-room to hear the singing without troubling them. Mrs. Harrington, like a very sensible *chaperon*, said, ‘Yes, take her, James! The child likes music, and you can bring her here afterwards.’”

“Oh!” he exclaimed, catching James Hastings by the arm, who was passing near them, “here, my dear fellow! Here is the runaway fair!—My proposal is that we all four repair to the music-room. I have secured such a snug little corner, with just four seats, where we can hear that divine woman in comfort.”

“Delightful!” exclaimed Margaret. “What is she going to sing?”

“Arundel can tell you. He called on her yesterday to arrange that.”

“They are flocking to the music-room,” said Arundel, drawing Margaret’s arm through

his, and leading her on, and explaining to her, as they went, the nature of his arrangements with Catalani.

Much as Margaret admired Catalani's voice, her pleasure was increased by hearing that Arundel was going to sing a duet with her. Garcia's throat had been seized that day with one of those many maladies incident to the throats of singers. Margaret thought that her friend's voice was almost as fine as Garcia's, and she knew his taste and musical knowledge were very much better than Catalani's.

" Oh ! I could not have wished for a greater treat ! Tell me all about this opera of Mozart's. I know very little about it. Few people in England do ! " she exclaimed, as she hung on the arm of Arundel, with all the confidence inspired by sympathy and old familiarity.

" What a sweet unaffected girl your sister Margaret is ! " said Lord Merle to James Hastings, as they kept close behind them. " It is astonishing when one compares her with other girls ! She is positively a wonder ! I can't think how she has managed to grow up like that. To look in her

face, now, I should say that, except for a certain womanliness, she is the same warm-hearted, clear-headed child she was seven years ago."

James looked pleased ; but a moment after said, with a sigh, " Poor Maggie ! I am sometimes very much troubled about her."

" Which way, Frank ?" inquired Arundel, looking back. " Where is your harbour of refuge in this human sea ? Depend upon it other adventurers have taken possession of it by this time."

" No, no ! I've established a good *locum tenens* there.—The recess between the third and fourth windows.—Look out for the head of ' Brutus ' above the crowd !"

" You don't mean to say you have been making Grey keep those places for us ?" said James Hastings, laughingly, as they proceeded slowly through the crowd.

" I do though ! *Il ne demandait pas mieux !* I made use of a talismanic word by which I have discovered he can be made as serviceable and as obedient as any slave of the ring or the lamp in an Arabian tale. There are such words for every one of us, Hastings. There's an ' Open Sesame ! ' to every heart."

"Not to this one!" said James, indicating by a glance some person on his other side.

Lord Merle bent forward.

"My uncle! He was flirting with Mrs. Harrington just now. No! you're right. And there's that other uncle of mine, Sir John Fortescue, talking to Catalani, by the *pianoforte*; I question whether his heart is easier to come at than my uncle Morton's. I can't think why my father has such men about him! He seems as if he could not do without them."

"Perhaps he can't, Merle. Men placed in your father's position can seldom ally themselves with those whom they *entirely* approve. Wherever there is a necessity to have a certain amount of work done, it seems to me that you must use at once the men who can do the work, without considering whether, in all other respects, you approve of them."

"Oh, sage beyond thy years!" exclaimed his friend, laughing. "The very argument my wise, middle-aged father used to me yesterday, on this same point. Ah! was it not well to have faith in my friend Brutus? See! the good booby has stood patiently in that position ever since I left him. Bless his great

stupid face! Does it not remind you of the old days at the Rectory? See! he brightens just as he used to do when Arundel or Margaret spoke to him. Ah! Arundel is shaking hands with him now!—My dear Grey, I am heartily ashamed of having kept you waiting so long; but I had some difficulty in getting our little party together.”

“Oh! pray don’t mention it. Very glad to have been of use. It’s quite like old times to see all of us together again!” jerked out the good-natured Brutus, colouring with pleasure.

“But Margaret must have a chair!” interposed Arundel.

“Grey,” said Lord Merle, “let the good folks see the comfortable quarters we have provided for them!” So saying, they drew back a curtain which hung behind the spot on which Mr. William Grey had been standing to prevent others from approaching it too nearly, and discovered a semicircular recess, or arch, in which Lord Merle had, early in the evening, caused a servant to place four small chairs and then draw the curtain before it.

“Not a bad idea of Merle’s, is it, Mar-

garet?" said Arundel, as they sat down. "The very best place in the room, you see!—just in front of the piano!—Nobody will be between us and it when she begins. She will never have a crowd in front of her—she's imperative on that point."

"Then I shall see you both well!" said Margaret, settling herself between her brother and Arundel with such an expression of pure, unqualified happiness in her face that Lord Merle was arrested for a moment by its radiance, as he stood before them, having courteously insisted on William Grey's occupying the fourth chair.

"What makes you look so very happy to-night, Margaret?" he inquired.

"How can you ask? Is not Catalani going to sing Mozart's music? Are we not all here together to enjoy it? Is it not charming to see all these gay-looking people—some such beautiful faces, too? I should be a strange creature if I were not happy! Don't talk to me, please. I am so full of joy I must sober myself a little, or I shall be quite wild when they begin the '*Crudel perchè*'?"

"That does not come first. She sings '*Deh Vieni*,' from the same opera, first. She has

done that to oblige me, not that she cares for it very much herself—it's not quite to her taste. But it shows off her voice well, and she is so very quick and clever that she has got the right spirit already. I heard her sing it this morning. It was delicious. You know she has been always singing Paër, Spontini, Fioravanti, Mosca, and Cimarosa; as yet, she knows little of Mozart. As little almost as you do.—Oh, Maggie! I wish you could have been with me in my late German tour! Then you would have had some idea of what Mozart and Haydn are. But even in Germany they are very little known. Have you heard of our new musical society in London? We got it up more than two years ago."

"The Philharmonic Society?" asked Margaret. "Oh yes! I've heard of it from the Harringtons.—There is a movement at the piano!—Madame Catalani is smiling at you, and beckoning! You must go."

Arundel went, and Lord Merle took his seat. "Bold in Arundel to venture to sing with her, is it not?" he asked. "But he has got so used to singing and playing with all sorts of musical celebrities in Germany that he does not mind it at all. I think he has

more self-possession and assurance than any fellow I ever saw. See how he is leading her to her place, and takes his own beside her. Ah ! that man with the moustache is going to play an accompaniment. No ! Arundel is. By Apollo ! that's going *too* far, Maggie ! But I suppose for Catalani the Regent himself would be but too happy to play an accompaniment !—He takes no more notice of this great room full of people than if they were so many stones ! He sees nothing but Catalani ! She seems immensely taken with him, too ! How she laughs ! What a charming, bewitching face she has ! How all those dandies are envying Arundel ! Now, they are going to begin. Oh ! a recitative !”

Catalani then sang the “*Deh Vieni*,” from Mozart’s “*Figaro*.” It was little known to the company, and produced a sensation. While the cantatrice was receiving the praises and thanks of her adorers, Arundel slipped away to rejoin Margaret. He looked at her with a smile of ecstasy, such as she had never seen before.

“Oh, Margaret ! if such things could last for ever !”

“We should be worn out in much less time

than threescore years and ten," said Lord Merle. "I could not bear much of that. It is too beautiful!—I must go and thank the witch." And he rose.

"You look sad, Margaret," said Arundel, seeing something new to him in her face.

"‘I am never merry when I hear sweet music,’ as that odious little Jessica says in the play. *You* look as if you did not belong to this world."

"Good music always lifts me above the earth.—Come with me, and I will introduce you to this marvellous singer.—No? Is this that absurd English vice called *propriety*, Maggie? I thought you despised it!"

"I am not old enough yet to do what seemeth good in my own eyes," said Margaret, blushing at this opposition to his proposal. "I believe my aunt and Sophia would *not* consider it proper for me to be introduced by you to a public singer on such an occasion. I am quite contented to see and hear her. I fancy her voice and her face are all I should care for!—I am a common-place English girl, you know, and cannot appreciate her foreign fascinations. She *is* very fascinating, I have

no doubt!—*I* think her over vivacious, and bold!”

“You! who are so full of animal spirits yourself!” said Arundel, in surprise at the asperity in Margaret’s usually gentle voice. She was surprised at it also, and at the sudden dislike she felt for the great singer. Worse than all,—she had *not* enjoyed the music, and was vexed with herself on that account. She thought the brilliant and gorgeous apartment, the heat, the gaily-dressed and mixed company, had helped to destroy the proper effect of the music on her mind; and she felt, that, instead of raising her above the earth as it did Arundel, who was “to the matter born,” it had had a contrary effect upon her. It had opened a flood-gate of new emotions within her. If a delicate *artiste* had sung at the moment some of Cherubino’s music from that same opera—“*Non so piu cosa son,*” or “*Voi che sapete*”—poor Margaret would have understood better what was going on in her heart, for her own feelings would have been expressed. She trembled, hot tears were in her throat, her eyelids were so heavy she could not raise them, and her colour came and went.

"You are not well, my dear Maggie!" said Arundel, bending forward kindly.

She drew back. "I am quite well, I thank you!—Do not call me dear Maggie, just as if I were a child!"

"I will attend in future to that important matter; but just now, perhaps, you had better let me use the privilege of an old friend, and take you out of the room.—Miss Price will take care of you. You are really too ill to enjoy the music."

"Excuse me, I enjoy it very much!—I am longing for your duet. There! Madame Catalani is looking for you!—is sending some one to fetch you! It is Lord Merle."

"Can she be jealous, at so early an age, of Catalani's beauty and talent?" thought Arundel, as he went away, perplexed at Margaret's manner. "She has talent herself. Perhaps she has an *artist's* jealousy! Impossible! Not simple Maggie Hastings! Something has made her cross. That stupid Grey, perhaps. However, she is so sweet a creature, she will not be cross long!—How very handsome Catalani is!" And in a moment he was engaged in a lively conversation with the singer, who

quite fascinated him for the moment, and who, in her turn, was charmed with the aristocratic young amateur, "*qui avait tant de science et de goût—qui n'avait pas l'air anglais—qui était adorable, avec ses manières moitié grand seigneur, moitié jeune artiste !*"

Margaret heard her say to him "*Mais, venez donc, milor ! tout le monde nous attend !*" She saw the sweet smile bestowed upon Arundel, and she saw Arundel's joyous look in reply. They stood together reading the music, and whispering, while the symphony was being played.—How delighted he looked !—Then he began "*Crudel perchè ?*"—singing, not like an automaton, nor like a heartless *roué*—as the Count in the foolish story of "*Le Nozze di Figaro*" is—but like what was in Mozart's mind when he wrote the music.—He sang like a true and passionate lover. Inspired by the music and Catalani, his fresh, pure voice scarcely betrayed its want of volume, except to the professional ears present. He was so free from vanity, that he was never hampered in his execution by the fear that he should not do himself justice, or be admired enough. The duet went perfectly—Catalani holding in her voice that it might not overpower that of

her companion, and entering into the spirit of her part. Her arch playfulness was adapted to a drawing-room on this occasion, and not to the stage. When Arundel repeated, for the last time, "*mi sento*," his face was so rapturous, so transformed with joy, that Margaret heard murmurs of admiration near her, and she saw the smile of approval on Catalani's beautiful lips. The smile meant merely—" *Très bien ! mais, très bien, mon petit !*" but Margaret heard Mr. Morton say to Mrs. Harrington, as the music ceased,

"See ! Those two people are turning each other's heads.—Arundel will grow giddy before long !"

"By Jove ! he's a lucky fellow ! I'd like Catalani to make me giddy," said some young man near them. "I shouldn't care if I never walked steadily again.—Heavens ! what a smile she has ! What a mouth !"

Mr. Morton happened to look round. He saw Margaret behind him, leaning back in her chair, gazing with great, wistful eyes on the group in front of the piano, and breathing fitfully, as if still listening to the impassioned music.—He did not forget she was there as he went on talking with his companions, who

were standing before her. She had excited his curiosity all the evening.

"But it's nonsense to talk about a woman of Catalani's age in that way. She is old enough to be Arundel's mother," said Mrs. Russell.

"Is she old?" asked Brutus. "I never should have thought it!"

"You would not have thought about it, you mean," said Mr. Morton. "I will tell you a little fact, Mrs. Russell,—which you and Mrs. Harrington, and other handsome, young women do not seem to know.—Youth is not indispensable for a fair enslaver.—Great as is the charm of youth in a woman, there are some women who can do without it—nay, because they are without it, men are disposed to believe that youth is something not worth having—any change in *them* would be for the worse. Women of moderate beauty, and great originality of character, have a sort of bodily originality and uniqueness which makes them perpetually charming. Age cannot wither them. Cleopatra or Catalani at fifty, is worth a dozen fair maidens of sixteen, in the eyes of any young man of taste and feeling. My nephew, there, is quite *épris* ; and on my

honour, I don't wonder at it, for she has shown great liking to him this evening."

" 'Great liking unto many, but true love to few,' "

whispered Lord Merle to James Hastings. "My wise uncle judges from his knowledge of ordinary men. He has no notion of the transitory emotions that impel, without taking possession of the artistic soul.—There is not depth of passion enough, not solidity enough, in that sweet singer yonder, to touch my brother's heart;—though he loves her voice, and is pleased with her altogether. My belief is, that in spite of the ministerings to *la belle passion* which he has found in music, painting, and poetry, my brother Arundel is as yet unscathed!—He likes the society of women; but he likes books and music better!—As for me, just now, I'm half in love with two girls I never saw!"

"That's a safe passion, at all events," said James, laughing. "Who are the unknown, divided objects?"

"The Trevor girls, my father's wards. They are coming to live with us in less than a year.—What's the matter? Margaret ill? Is she? This confounded heat! All these

people standing before her. She is not used to these things.—Here, get her out of that crowd to this door!—It leads to Miss Price's rooms. I thought Arundel was with her!—Ah! he's deep in his flirtation with Catalani!—However, she will go soon, and then the dancing will begin.—We must have Margaret well again for that. She used to be so fond of dancing!”

“I need not say anything to Mrs. Harrington, I suppose, if you take her to Miss Price?” he inquired, as he opened the side-door.

“Oh, no!” said Margaret, faintly, “don't say a word!—I shall be better presently. The room is too warm. Thank you!”

James conducted her through the door, and Lord Merle followed, closing it behind him.

“A wonderfully clever little girl that!—with her bright brown eyes and light hair!” said Mr. Morton, in a whisper to Sir John Fortescue. “She knows what she's about. Simplicity is her cue.”

“She's not at all pretty, but there's something that arrests attention about her. She looks like a picture I have seen,” replied Sir John. “What's all that? Oh! Cata-

lani going !—This room will soon be emptied ! I've a word to say to you, Morton, and to Willoughby and Arundel. Bring them here if you can." And Sir John turned to a group of ladies, who looked as if they wanted somebody to talk to them.—Sir John laid it down as a rule at evening parties to say as many civil words to as many uninteresting people as he could conveniently come at. Fair words cost nothing, but they buy golden opinions.

CHAPTER XI.

OUT OF THE FASHIONABLE WORLD.

"Oh! thou art fairer than the evening air,
Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars."

MARLOWE.

"Dead shepherd! Now I know thy saw of might;
'Who ever loved, that loved not at first sight?'"

As You Like It.

"When men were fond I smiled and wondered how!"

Measure for Measure.

"WHAT a relief!" exclaimed Lord Merle, as soon as he had shut out the sounds of the music-room.—They were in a cool, dimly-lighted lobby. "This is elysium, after that heat and glare. However, I am an *âme damnée*, and must go back to the other place as soon as I have shown you the way to Miss Price's rooms.—She looks very pale! Get her to the good old woman as fast as you

can!—This way! There!—knock at that door.—I hope you will soon be able to come back. Yes; that's the door!"

James, with Margaret half fainting on his arm, knocked at the door indicated. There was an immediate reply of "Come in." James went in accordingly; and if Lord Merle could have seen into Miss Price's room at that moment, he would have entered too, in spite of the attractions of the ball and the promise to his father.—Miss Price was not alone.

"My dear madam, will you excuse this intrusion?—My sister is ill, and Lord Merle suggested that I should bring her to you——"

"Is it Margaret?" inquired the old lady, rising hastily from her seat between two young ladies, who also rose, and looked compassionately at Margaret's senseless form.—"Here, my dear Mr. James, place her on this sofa near the window—poor girl! I suppose the rooms are very crowded. What folly it is to invite your friends to come and be stifled!"

"I think the music has affected her rather too much," said James, putting back Margaret's hair tenderly from her forehead, as he bent over the arm of the sofa on which he had laid her.

“Don’t lean over her, my dear James!” said Miss Price; “she wants air, and a little cold water. Will you ring the bell?”

As James turned to look for the bell, a female voice of strangely sweet quality sounded in his ear.

“You need not ring; my sister has gone to fetch water.”

For the first time he saw the speaker distinctly.—What a contrast to the gorgeously adorned women that lately thronged around him, and dazzled his eyes or pleased his fancy!—It was a young lady, whose quaint simplicity of attire (something between a Quaker and a nun) did not conceal, as it was intended to do, the extraordinary brilliancy of her beauty. A gown of grey stuff enveloping the figure to the throat, and relieved only by a small white collar, did not hide the exquisite nobleness of her young form,—nor did the little white cap, *à la sœur de charité*, conceal the shape of that beautiful head, or the rare perfection of the Rafaelle-like face.—James Hastings could not choose but gaze upon so fair a vision.—While his eyes were still fixed—half fearing that it would melt into the air and prove to be such

stuff as dreams are made of—lo! a second form, clothed like the first, stood beside her, bearing a crystal ewer. Together they approached his sister, and began to bathe her face and chafe her hands. They were silent, and graceful as ministering spirits. That second apparition was fair—more beautiful than any earthly creature he had ever seen, except the first. *She* was a miracle that earth in all its mighty round could not match!—Soon his eyes saw only her as she stood at Margaret's head, with her lovely face bowed, and her large lustrous eyes shadowed by their transparent lids, fixed in tender pity on the senseless girl.

“Surely there is something more than human in that beauty!” his heart whispered. “Angel!—ah! now I see that men are not fools or madmen when they call a woman *angel*! Thy Spirit, oh God! looks out from that face! Thou hast vouchsafed so much of goodness and harmonious beauty—so much of divinity to this, thy creature—that it were scarcely idolatry to kneel. All the air is full of her, and reflects her beauty—the place on which she stands is holy ground.

‘ ’Tis her breathing that
 Perfumes the chamber thus :—the flame o’ the taper
 Bows towards her ; and would underpeep her lids
 To see the enclosed lights ; now canopied
 Under the windows, white and azure, laced
 With blue of heaven’s own tint.’ ”

Thus wandered the fancy of James Hastings—leading him, with a quickened pulse and kindled eye, into a new world.—A world higher, purer, brighter, warmer, and more beautiful than the one in which he had hitherto lived!—a world up above the common earth!—nearer—oh ! much nearer to God !—*To see her—to be near her*—surely this is Heaven ?—he thought.—Yes ! The heaven of love ; in which pure and noble souls,—gentle and true souls,—expatiate freely, and find a happy home,—*for a time*—forgetful of the lets and hindrances of mortality ; but learning thoroughly, in that brief space, the lesson which they can never forget—the lesson which

“ That boon, life’s richest treat,”

was perhaps designed by its great Giver to teach them ; viz., that, in spite of all misery and short-comings, and sin and direful change, there is in man’s nature a capacity for love and happiness—a capacity for *being* good and

pure, which (as God hath made nothing in vain) *must* and *will* struggle into a fitting sphere for its full and permanent exercise. I cannot think that any one who has ever known a true, passionate, yet pure love on earth, can believe that man is not made for immortal happiness. There is an earnest—a foretaste of the real perfect life in *that*, which no amount of wordy logic or balance of moral and physical probabilities can destroy.—In some moods we may say, with the sweet singer by the tomb :

“Behold! we know not anything,
I can but trust that good shall fall
At last—far off—at last—to all,
And every winter change to spring.”

But in other moods a stronger faith, a brighter hope is ours, and we say boldly, “One thing we *know*, God hath made nothing in vain. Nothing—not the smallest aptitude of man’s nature—how then should its greatest be given in vain? Can the capacity for love and joy be given us merely to throw a darker gloom over the sorrows of life by a contrast with what our hearts are made to yearn for? Nay—without love of some sort—high or low—pure or impure—much or little—there is

no *life* at all ; and the very atmosphere love
breathes is Joy !

‘ Joy is the sweet voice—joy the luminous cloud—

We in ourselves rejoice !

And thence flows all that charms our ear or sight,

All melodies the echoes of that voice,

All colours a suffusion from that light.’ ”

You may prove the truth even in this world.—
Go now, my reader, and love the best things
and the best men you know !—Love truth and
goodness with your whole soul for the space of
one year, and see how near to happiness you
will reach !

This is an experiment that the virtuous
are always trying to make—that *is* their
life !—And they find the failures in that ex-
periment, upon the whole, infinitely nobler,—
ay, and more gladdening, too, than successes
in any other trial !—You may read that truth
written in their faces, if you have discerning
eyes.

Love is an involuntary upward springing
of the soul towards any manifestation of the
spirit of God—either as truth—or goodness—
or beauty.—We may make mistakes ;—those
who have much love in their hearts and but
little judgment in their brains—who are more
prone to love than discerning as to what

ought to be loved—make many mistakes.—We are lured by false lights—we love false appearances of good, and mourn for the snowy Florimels of life as if they were the true beauty—we, the little-gifted and the weak! And, verily, we have our reward! We suffer; but, by God's blessing, we learn also;—by His help our weakness grows into something like strength, and our little faculties grow larger.—Then, it may be, late in life, comes, as a cordial to our heart, the calm and holy wisdom which Jesus, the Son of Sirach, has spoken in high poetic words:

“But Thou hast mercy upon all; for Thou canst do all things, and winkest at the sins of men because they should amend.

“For Thou lovest all the things that are, and abhorrest nothing that Thou hast made: for never wouldst Thou have made anything if Thou hadst hated it. And how could anything have endured if it had not been Thy will? or be preserved if not called by Thee?

“But Thou sparest all: for they are Thine, oh Lord! Thou lover of souls! For Thine incorruptible spirit is in all things.”

“And what has this to do with James Hastings and his first love?” asks some one. Much,

good friend! In the dark environment which walls about our mortal life are some few portals whence the imprisoned soul looks forth, or takes flight into the great world beyond.—Suddenly, when he thought not of it, the fair rose-wreathed portal of Love turned back melodiously on its golden hinges full in the face of this young man. His spirit sprang forward into the fair garden that bloomed so brightly;—and, though he might not wander there, he caught glimpses through the blossoms of the everlasting hills in the distance, and knew that this garden contained a pathway leading out into immortality. Without *thinking*, he *felt* that he—that the fair being before him—were immortal, and that now, for the first time, and for ever, he loved.

He stood thus with his thoughtful eyes fixed on her in whom God's incorruptible spirit shone forth so purely to him—how long he knew not.—It was long enough to mature his love and impress her image on his heart for ever.—Time is but thought and emotion, and he had lived a year in those few minutes.

At length Margaret opened her eyes, and gazed, somewhat vaguely, around. When she

saw him she tried to smile ; but he—he saw her not. Not till the large blue eyes above his sister's face turned on him, with a smile that sympathised with Margaret's, did he awake to a consciousness of all around him. Once more that rich voice came to his ear. Poor words, how he cherished them !

“She is recovering, you see.”

“My dear !” whispered Miss Price to the other young lady who knelt beside Margaret, and was fanning her, “don't you think we had better loosen her dress ? I dare say it is tighter than she is accustomed to wear her frocks !—she seems to sigh and gasp for breath sadly.”

“Yes ! It would be a good thing to unfasten her gown. I should have unfastened it at first if her brother had not been here.”

“Dear me ! I had forgotten him.—He is anxious, I dare say, poor fellow !—he is very fond of his sister !—But he ought on no account to have come in at all !” added the old lady with a sly smile. “What would Lady Glengarry say if she knew that a young man—and, to my thinking, a graceful and comely one—had been permitted to gaze on her fair nuns ? I am a sadly negligent duenna. However,

"I'll send him away now." So saying, she rose, and approaching James she whispered a few words, upon hearing which he heaved a deep sigh, and looking towards the sofa once more, turned and left the room.

He was found in the lobby some time afterwards by Lord Merle, leaning against a wall, with his eyes fixed on the one opposite.

"How is Margaret?"

"Better, I believe."

"What are you doing here? You have the most extraordinary look—like a good spirit cast into outer darkness!—If Margaret is not well enough to come yet, you may as well step into our Paradise and see the Houris dancing—Sophia is really perfect in a minuet!"

"Thank you! No!—I'll just inquire for Margaret again, and bring her to the ball-room if she is able to come. Don't you stay away!—You, the heir of the house!"

"I'll just step with you to Miss Price's room," said Lord Merle.

Much to his friend's annoyance he did so. James dreaded lest other eyes should light on his discovered treasure. To his great relief no one was with Miss Price when they entered her room; it was emptied of its loveliness.

"What have you done with Margaret, Miss Price?" asked Lord Merle.

"I have sent her home. She felt so much disinclined to return to the company that I accepted the offer of some friends, who came to see me this evening, and who were going to Kensington, and undertook to convey her safely to her aunt. She went about a quarter of an hour ago!"

"I am very sorry!—This is Margaret's first ball," said the good-natured Lord Merle, "and James and I were anxious she should enjoy it."

James Hastings sighed.

"Don't take things too gravely, my melancholy Jacques!" he added, laughing; "Margaret will be well enough to-morrow!—Good night, Miss Price!"

James followed his friend from the room; but after he had closed the door, he suddenly recollected that he had not wished the old lady "Good night!"

"Be quick about it, then!" said Lord Merle, hastening along the lobby; "you will find me in the ball-room."

James had no intention of doing so. He re-entered Miss Price's room, and began to speak about Margaret; said he was in no

hurry to go; preferred this charming, quiet room, &c. He walked to the open window, for the night was warm. There he saw that great part of the music-room was visible through a window, also open, which faced the one where he stood.—It was almost empty now; but he observed Sir John Fortescue, Mr. Morton, Mr. Arundel Raby, Mr. Harrington, and Sir Willoughby Morton talking earnestly together in the middle of the room. He could not help noticing how far superior to the rest Arundel looked.

“You must have heard the singing very well from here, Miss Price!” he remarked.

“Yes; it was on that account the two girls came here to-night. They persuaded me to smuggle them in to hear Catalani, and have a peep at the *beau monde*.”

“Some relatives of her own, doubtless,” he thought—“yet I never saw *l’air noble* in such perfection. Those two girls are of the right sort of aristocracy. Nature has given them a patent of nobility.—Thank Heaven! then she is not *above* me in rank!”

“Were those young ladies English?” he asked. “They wore a peculiar dress—a very picturesque and becoming one, I think.”

"My dear James, it is frightful!—It is because they are beautiful that you did not observe the ugliness of the dress.—So plain!—so unsuited to their——" and she stopped.

"I don't think you mentioned their names?" he said, inquiringly.

"No;" and the little dry smile puckered her mouth. "I don't think I did. They are orphans, poor girls! Their mother was a pupil and dear friend of mine."

"I suppose it was they who took Margaret home?" James inquired.

"Yes. She was quite able to bear the motion of a carriage. You will go and see her in the morning?"

"Oh, yes," he replied; and taking out his watch he observed that it was "not yet eleven o'clock."

"You had better go back to the company."

"Perhaps so. Good night, dear Miss Price! Many thanks for your attention to Maggie."

Within an hour after James Hastings left Miss Price's room, his aunt and sister were seated together in the study, at Sunny Bank. There was a fire in the grate, and they had drawn their chairs close to it, for it was the "dead waste and middle of the night,"—and

they felt chilly. Margaret was being forced to take some spiced wine by her aunt, and she held a biscuit in her hand which she pretended to eat.

“And so they really are so very beautiful?” asked Miss Hastings, in reference to something Margaret had said.

“Beautiful, aunt? Words are quite poor to express what they are!—I never saw—I never could have imagined, anything so perfect, so heavenly!—If I did not think that I should see them again before long, I would go and stand near their house till they came out—hire myself as a servant to them—anything for the glorious privilege of seeing such creatures!—Oh! aunt! I never felt till to-night what a tremendous power beauty, in a woman, is! But how different the Beauty of these exquisite, pure beings, upon whose souls the breath of this world has never passed, who seem to me transcendent in goodness and holiness, as in loveliness—and the brilliant, quite earthly, mere body-and-talent Beauty of this great singer, Catalani!”

“My child,” said her aunt, “if you could know the early history of this Italian woman, you might, perhaps, see as much to admire in

her resistance of the evil with which she has had to battle, as you see in the utter ignorance of evil in—— Who can that be, ringing, at so late an hour?"

In a few minutes steps were heard in the passage.

"It is James!" said Margaret.

"I thought you would not be gone to bed," he said, shaking hands with his aunt. "I was anxious to see how Maggie—— Oh! oh! Wine and biscuits! It's not a very desperate case, then!"

"No!—But we are just going to bed. You will sleep here, of course? Your room is always ready. Will you take anything? You look pale and exhausted."

"I am tired. I don't wish for anything except my bed. I won't detain you, aunt. I see Audrey is waiting.—Here is your candle, Maggie!—I will light it for you, dear!" And he bade his aunt "Good night!" and half shutting the door, he turned to his sister—"Are you really quite recovered, love?"

"Yes! but I am so tired and foolishly nervous, dear!—Good night!" And she threw her arms round his neck, and kissed him affectionately.

"God bless you, Maggie!—What! in tears, my darling?"

She passed her hand across her eyes.—"It is nothing, James! I don't think fashionable parties quite suit me.—I was glad to come home!"

"By the way, Maggie, who were those strangely dressed girls who brought you home?"

"Don't *you* know. They were Lady Geraldine and Lady Alice Trevor, Lord Carleton's wards."

"Oh!—Good night, dear!"

And the brother and sister parted,—each conscious of a mighty change—the birth of a new passion in the soul.

* * * * *

"Aunt! I fancy we shall have a great many visitors to-day," said Margaret, as they sat at breakfast one morning a few weeks after the ball at Raby House.

"Why do you think so, my love?"—Miss Hastings had insensibly learned to love her niece, and to use gentle epithets to her, during the three years they had lived together. "Have you been dreaming dreams? or has Audrey found any *strangers* in her tea-cup this morning?"

Margaret laughed a little, but blushed a great deal. Her elegant sister, Sophia, was always horrified at Margaret's blushes. "If it were a gentle suffusion of the cheek," the former would say, "it might not be unbecoming—but to flush all over a fiery red—face, neck, arms—to the tips of your fingers—as you do, Margaret, is quite ugly and vulgar. You really should put some check upon your feelings! Poor mamma used to tell you so."—Margaret felt very antagonistic to Sophia, and never pretended to have strong sisterly affection for her—but she was many years before she got over a sense of wickedness for not really loving her own sister.—On the present occasion, Margaret blushed because she *had* been dreaming that Sophia came that day and teased her with sneers and questions about her "behaviour on the night of the ball;" and had repeated, in a sisterly way, every disagreeable thing she had heard others say on the subject. Her aunt looked at her again, and said:

"Oh! you *have* been dreaming, Maggie, if I am to judge by the silence of the tongue and the eloquence of the cheek."

"I dreamed that Sophia came—and Mrs. Harrington. After that we had a host of

other people. I do not remember who,—but half a dozen at least. More than we ever have.”

“It is not unlikely that your dream may come true, as it seems we are going to have a fine day.—Joseph Rosemary has doffed his thick coat. He and Audrey were carrying on their flirtation in a very merry key this morning, under my window.—Audrey laughs as if she were a girl,” added Miss Hastings, laughing a little herself; and then suddenly setting down the cup, she leaned back in her chair, and put her hand over her heart.

“Don’t be alarmed, dear! It is only one of my spasms. I have been troubled by them all night.—I ought not to laugh. Laughing is good for people like you and Audrey, but not for me, you see!—Why, you are as pale now as you were red a short time ago! It is passing away, I assure you. I have been subject to these spasms of the heart several years, now.”

“But are they not dangerous, dear aunt?” asked Margaret, anxiously.

“No, my dear, I believe not—but diseases of the heart and of the circulation of the blood are not much understood.—The quiet life I lead is very favourable to my health, you

know.—I have no excitements, no disquietudes, and the tenderest attentions from my dear niece;” and she stroked Margaret’s fair hair, as she knelt beside her. “I was thinking this morning, in the midst of my pain, as I heard Audrey laughing with Joseph, how full of blessings my life is!—Those two faithful servants love me heartily! Such love alone would make my life far happier than that of many who, as our new poet says, ‘Have none to love them—none whom they can love.’ (*That*, by the way, Margaret, must be their own fault!) But when I think of the three happy years we have spent together—of the joy you have added to my life, by your improvement, intellectual and moral,—by your genuine sympathy with my chief study, and by your equally genuine affection for me,—when I think of this, Margaret, I cannot dwell on the idea of losing such a blessing!”

“But why think of it, dear aunt?” inquired Maggie, tenderly embracing her. “Has my father written for me?”

“No, no, my dear!” said Miss Hastings. She sighed, and kissed Margaret’s cheek. She did not add the rest of the reply—though it was in her mind. “Your father has not sent

for you, but my heavenly Father has sent for me."

They sat in silence for some minutes. Presently Miss Hastings said, "Ring for them to take away these things.—We will not do any work this morning.—I feel as if I wanted a holiday after my bad night. You shall bring me my knitting, and come and read the first volume of 'Waverley' aloud."

Margaret sprang up delightedly. "Ah! that will be better than your dictating the account of poor John Davenant's case for Dr. ——. That can be done to-morrow, when you are better.—It is perfectly charming to see how this wonderful romance has bewitched *you*, as well as all the rest of us!—Never tell me you don't care for fiction again! It is only three weeks since 'Waverley' was published, and this is the fourth time of reading it!—Bravo! my scientific aunt!"

"Is it only three weeks since 'Waverley' was published?"

"Just three weeks. You remember, it came to you the day after the publication."

"Oh, yes! Arundel brought it to amuse me, saying he had read it through without stopping; and I remember somebody that

was going to a grand entertainment at Raby House the day after that, and who was so madly absorbed in the new book, that she could not begin to dress till she had finished it.—I think that young lady kept certain friends waiting an hour for her.”

Margaret laughed. “Aunt! pray remember to forget that circumstance when you talk to Sophia about my numerous faults. She would never forgive me if she suspected what it was that kept me so long that evening. Ah! if I live to be as old as old Parr, I shall never forget my first reading of ‘Waverley!’—There I sat beside you all day, on that very same stool, and never once tired of reading aloud.—Let us try it again to-day, aunt. Perhaps the pleasure will come back.”


Margaret paused, and stooped to pick up one of her aunt’s flowers, and placed it in her lap, whilst she impressed a kiss on her forehead. There was a tremulousness in the kiss which made her aunt look up at Margaret’s eyes, to see what comment they made on the lips. She saw something there which awoke a new anxiety; but she was too experienced and too tender to say a word to her niece about it.

“ Go, my child, and give your orders for the day to the servants, and then fetch the magic book, and transport us to sixty years since.”

Margaret left the room.

“ I wonder what happened at Raby House that night to change my niece so much !” thought the maiden aunt, as she watched her retreating form. “ Is it the dawn of that passion which makes or mars a woman’s happiness ? Poor child ! God shield *her* from the storm, and grant *her* the sunshine. But she is so young—so active-minded, and with a heart filled to overflowing with the calm affections of early years.—Love will not find her so easy a victim as he found me !—Yet, Lord Merle and his brother are very fitting objects to awaken love in a young girl’s breast. She has seen too much of them. She is scarcely aware, I fear, of the difference that rank will make between them now. I never thought of the danger to her.—How selfish, how forgetful we become as we grow older ! Surely *I*, of all persons, ought to have foreseen this danger !”

By the time Margaret returned with the book, her aunt was in the midst of a painful train of thought. The young girl saw



it—saw the inquiring glance at herself—and dreading instinctively the questions which might ensue, she assumed a gay manner, and said :

“Now, my good aunt, here is a great wizard come to dispel the cloud from your brow!—Take up your knitting, and yield yourself to the incantation.”

For the first half hour of the lecture neither reader nor listener forgot herself and her own feelings.—After that, the charm worked completely, and they were so deeply engaged with the Baron of Bradwardine at Tully Veolan, that they were deaf to the ringing of the gate-bell, and to the subsequent approach of visitors, until they passed in front of the open window.

“Lady Fortescue and Mr. Morton, aunt!” exclaimed Margaret, in a tone of extreme vexation mingled with surprise. “I don’t like her (she’s such a bad imitation of poor Lady Carleton!), and I can’t bear that man! It makes me feel angry to look at him. I need not stay—need I?—I can go out at the window without meeting them.”

“You had better stay in the room for a short time, my love!” said her aunt; “then

you can slip through the window and take a turn in the garden till they go."

Margaret sat down again, and the visitors were ushered in.

They were very nearly strangers to Miss Hastings, and her manner of receiving them showed plainly enough that she was not anxious to promote a greater degree of intimacy. Margaret thought that no one had the power of keeping people at the exact distance which suited her own wishes so well as her aunt.

Lady Fortescue began in her usual lively, easy manner.—"I have intended to call on you, my dear madam, every day for the past month!—I think you knew my sister, Lady Carleton, well. We often heard Lord Carleton speak of the Hastings family when we were children.—He used to spend his holidays with you, sometimes.—Don't you remember, Henry, Frederick always gave us such glowing accounts of Harry Hastings and his family?"

"Yes," said Mr. Morton, addressing Miss Hastings, "I have a very lively recollection of the way in which you were all held up as patterns to us. Your brother, the present

rector of Carleton, was with Frederick and me at Eton."

"I have heard him say that he knew Mr. Henry Morton very well," replied Miss Hastings. She then turned to the lady, with a look which said as plainly as look could say,—"*Et puis?*—These are no new facts.—To what am I indebted for the honour of this visit and these reminiscences?"

Lady Fortescue was not prepared to find "the old maid who never went into society" so perfectly self-possessed—so unimpressed by the honour of a visit from a leader of *ton*. She began to fancy that she should fail in the objects of her visit.—"She is not a person to be managed very easily," thought the clever little woman. "I wonder how it is that I can't get on with her!"

"Ever since I had the pleasure of meeting your nieces at Raby House, the other evening, I have felt a strong desire to make your acquaintance, Miss Hastings," said Lady Fortescue.—"Mrs. Russell is making quite a sensation, I assure you. Every one admires her."

"She is a very pretty young woman," remarked Miss Hastings. "She admires the fashionable world very much, and the fashion-

able world, in return, admires her. It is not an uncommon reciprocity."

Mr. Morton here tried to improve matters by speaking to Margaret.—"I observed the other night that you are very fond of music, and have been well taught. You must have had a first-rate instructor. From what professor did you learn?"

"From no professor. Your sister, Lady Carleton, taught me."

"Indeed!—She taught Arundel, too. You learned together, perhaps."

What would Margaret have given to be able to suppress the blush which stole over her every visible atom of skin, as she replied :

"Yes, sometimes."

Mr. Morton looked curiously for a moment at the downcast eyes and crimson cheek.—"She is much younger than I fancied!—Naïve and innocent *à faire rire*!—Strange mixture! But she can be easily pumped—that's clear."

"Have you wept for the loss of Catalani?" he said, aloud.

"Ah!" interrupted Lady Fortescue, "I hear you have got Miss Margaret Hastings on the subject of music;—and that brings me to the secondary object of my visit.—I am going

to get up a musical entertainment, in a small way.—My nephew Merle is managing the thing.—His brother is quite a musician, and has promised to sing; and my eldest girl is a prodigious fine singer. But they say they cannot get on without a contralto.—As my Mira is to take a part, I object to having any professional persons engaged;—and they have been searching their whole acquaintance for a good contralto. My nephew Merle said yesterday that Miss Margaret Hastings' voice is a charming contralto, and that she would be in every way an acquisition to our *corps operatique*. So I promised the young people to call on you, my dear madam, and beg you to allow your niece, if she will favour us, to give us her valuable assistance."

As Miss Hastings did not seem highly charmed with this invitation, and Margaret's face wore not an ecstatic expression, Lady Fortescue began to think that the sop she had brought for Cerberus would not be so palatable as she expected. "If they do not jump at this offer, which most of the girls in London would be but too happy to accept, how shall I get on with my other business?" However, she went on working at this.

"You need not fear that you will be among strangers, my dear !" she said, turning kindly to Margaret. " We shall have your own sister and Mrs. Harrington and her brother, besides my two nephews.—A little crowd of old acquaintances, in short ! And I think I can promise you some new acquaintances whom you will like. In the first place, there is my Mira, and then there are the two persons for whose entertainment we first thought of getting up the opera at all. You have never seen *them*—no one has seen them yet ;—they have been living in the strictest retirement, and are not to be brought out till next year—when Lord Carleton takes the guardianship of them ; and then, of course, all the trouble of introducing them will fall upon me."

"And some of the glory, too !" interposed her brother. "The Ladies Trevor are very handsome girls, but so much is said about them now, that I fear there will be some disappointment when their veritable forms appear in the world."

"Impossible !" exclaimed his sister, with enthusiasm ; "they are so beautiful that it is impossible to exaggerate in speaking of them."

The door was thrown open at this moment, and Mrs. Russell, Mrs. Harrington, and Mr. William Grey were announced. After the usual greetings and some ill-concealed surprise on Carlotta's part at the sight of Lady Fortescue and her brother, every one took a seat—Brutus having accommodated himself with the smallest and most uncomfortable chair in the room, which happened to be near Margaret.

"As I was saying, Miss Hastings," continued Lady Fortescue, "Lady Alice and Lady Geraldine are the most beautiful girls I ever saw. But you know my brother-in-law's affairs so well, you have probably seen his wards."

"Pardon me," said Miss Hastings, "I know your brother-in-law's affairs so ill that I have scarcely heard that he has any wards. I am quite ignorant of what goes on in the fashionable world. The fame of these young ladies has not reached my retirement."

"Well parried!" thought Mr. Morton.

"How strange!—I fancied you and Mr. Hastings were quite in his confidence."

"Lord Carleton can't be going to marry her if she does not *know* about the Trevor

girls!" thought Lady Fortescue.—"Besides, she is so calm and easy. I thought it *must* be a mistake—yet John and Henry seemed certain about it. Now I see her plainly the idea is preposterous. She is very *distingué*-looking, I grant—and must have been handsome; but what man in Carleton's position would think of marrying a woman of her age?—who looks as if she were dying, too.—A woman without name, fame, fortune, youth, or beauty! It is quite absurd! John may say what he likes about 'the boy being father to the man,' and Carleton's natural character being romantic, and his disease a poetic insanity. He was just the person to *faire des folies* when a boy, but he is the last person to do an irrational thing now.—Marry this grave, sickly old maid, from a sentimental recollection of his fancy for her!—It is just as likely that Henry should cry 'All for love, or the world well lost.'" These thoughts passed through Lady Fortescue's brain, and she had reached this conclusion when Miss Hastings addressed her.

"Are these young ladies the daughters of the late Duke of Alderney? And is Lord Carleton their guardian?"

"Did you not know all about that, aunt?" asked Mrs. Russell. "They have been living with Lady Glengarry ever since their father's death."

"Yes," added Mrs. Harrington; "and it is reported that she is so fond and proud of them that she can't bear to give them up to Lord Carleton, as by the duke's will she ought to do this very summer. She has come to London on purpose to persuade the earl to let her keep them out of the wicked world yet a little longer. She is an awfully pious woman, and they are reported to be young saints."

"At all events they are as beautiful as any of Rafaele's," said Mr. Morton, casting his eyes on a fine copy of a St. Theresa by that artist, which Arundel had brought with him from Germany for Miss Hastings.

"How do you know, Mr. Morton? Have you seen them?" inquired Sophia, who was an interested party when female beauty was under discussion.

"I have seen them.—I saw them yesterday.—I am going to see them again to-day."

"What! are they in London?—Does not Lady Glengarry fear that the very atmosphere

of London will taint their purity?" asked Carlotta, laughing.

"I suppose it was on that account that she established them and herself at Kensington," he replied.

Mrs. Harrington and Mrs. Russell immediately attacked him with questions concerning the invisible beauties, and while he was answering them, Lady Fortescue drew her chair closer to Miss Hastings, and lowering her voice, began to execute the most important business for which she had made this visit—viz., to ascertain, if possible, whether her sister had left the North Ashurst property, *unconditionally*, to her second son. Now, the little woman herself cared nothing about the matter, but Henry was especially anxious to know this fact, as there were two boroughs on the estates, each of which returned two members to Parliament, and if Mr. Arundel Baby became sole possessor of such valuable property at the end of another year, it seemed to him that no time should be lost in letting the fact be promulgated among his party in order that they might pay honour where honour was due.

"My dear Miss Hastings," she began, "I

was in Dublin, you may remember, at the time when poor Caroline died, and wretched enough I was not to be with her at the last; for I know she had many things she wished to consult me about, especially concerning her two dear boys.—You were sent for at her death, I heard.”

“I was,” said Miss Hastings.—“Hers was not a painful death. She passed away peacefully in her husband’s arms, with her two children before her.—She was happy then.—She had been long prepared for death.” And Miss Hastings looked as if she were recalling that scene.

Lady Fortescue found herself insensibly picturing that subject to her mind; and during the silence that ensued, the voluble Carlotta, and the cool mocking tones of Mr. Morton, might be heard on the one side, and Mr. William Grey’s semi-articulate sentences addressed in a growling whisper to Margaret, on the other.

“What’s that book you have in your hand, Miss Margaret?” he asked, trying hard to sit on the small chair.

“The famous new book—‘Waverley.’”

“I guessed as much!—It’s my usual luck!

Of course somebody else thought of it before I did! I'm still very slow, Miss Margaret!" He looked much annoyed, and a something between a sigh and a grunt escaped him.

"What is the matter?" asked Margaret, smiling faintly, and trying to attend to what he said, for her thoughts were far off, meditating on the loveliness of Lord Carleton's wards. "What is the matter? Have you been slow to read this book?"

"Oh, I never thought of reading it *myself*!" he replied, hastily. "Books are not much in my line.—But everybody is talking about this, and saying it's the cleverest book ever written, and it came into my head yesterday that *you* would be sure to like it, so I got it for you, and here it is!"—Saying which he thrust his great hand into a side-pocket, and brought out at a grasp the three little volumes—so precious in their day. "I suppose you don't want this, now that you have another copy?"

"But this is not mine, it is my aunt's," said Margaret, touched by the kind thought of her old friend—for it *was* a kind thought which had prompted him to gratify a taste with which he had not the slightest sympathy.

Brutus brightened at the words. "Then, perhaps, you have *not* got one of your own?"

"No;—and I shall be very glad to accept this from you!" said Margaret, looking kindly at him. "You could give me nothing I like better."

"That's very kind of you to say so! You always were very kind!"—And he ventured to look at the honest, brown eyes, which he thought more beautiful than any book. There was a touch of drollery in their expression, as Margaret returned his glance, and said,

"As all the world is talking about this book, would it not be as well for you to know what the story is?"

"Ah! if you would *tell* me the story as you used to tell stories to poor Naldo and me years ago! I shall never forget your telling us about 'Sindbad,' and 'Peter Wilkins.' I never cared for the stories in the book half as well. I wish those times would come again!"

Margaret replied cheerfully, "I begin to want to know what is to happen to myself and everybody I care for.—My story-telling days are over now. I want to *live* a story. Don't you?"

"I don't know," replied Mr. William Grey.

"I don't think my story would be very interesting; but perhaps *yours* will be.—As good as 'Cinderella,' or 'Snowdrop,' or 'Beauty and the Beast,' or some of those queer tales that Naldo was never tired of hearing.—It's pleasant to talk of those old times to you. But, bless me! I was forgetting I had something else to speak about. Carlotta is making such a row with Mr. Morton, and Lady Fortescue seems as if she wanted to talk secrets with your aunt—don't you think you and I might go into the garden?—It looks very pretty."

Margaret was pleased with his proposal, for she longed to be out in the sunshine, and unconscious that she was affording her sister a capital subject for a lecture on "the strange indecorum of her behaviour to gentlemen" (which was subsequently administered), she rose and walked off quietly into the garden with Mr. William Grey.

Miss Hastings observed their departure, and thought them very wise; she longed to be out there herself. But Lady Fortescue and a continually unceasing pain in her side forbade.

"The thought of poor Caroline's death

makes me quite melancholy!" said Lady Fortescue. "By the way,—is it true that she died before she gave her last directions to the lawyer?"

"It is true."

"Then she left no will?"

"No legal document; but she left her last will in a letter to her husband."

"Do you know the particulars of it? I ask from motives of affection; you know I am much interested in my nephew."

"Lord Carleton himself could best satisfy your curiosity," replied Miss Hastings.

"Ah! I see you do *not* know my brother-in-law. There never was any man more reserved in family matters. It is impossible to get him to speak about these things. He keeps them strictly to himself."

"Then, do you not think it is becoming in those who, by chance or designedly, are acquainted with these family matters, to keep them strictly to themselves also?" And Miss Hastings could not refrain from smiling at the very small talent for diplomacy exercised by Lady Fortescue on this occasion. The latter bit her pretty lip and said,

"Oh! of course." She had "spoken un-

thinkingly," and "had no motive but interest in her dear nephew's affairs." Poor Lady Fortescue! If her feelings had not been roused by speaking of her sister, she certainly would never have acquitted herself so ill; but had she used all the skill she possessed, it would not have elicited the information she required from Miss Hastings; because Miss Hastings acted upon principle, and had made it a rule *not* to speak on the subject which excited her present visitor's curiosity, except in a general way; stating nothing more than she was well aware must be known by every servant in the Raby family, and had been talked of all over London. Beaten back on her main point, Lady Fortescue returned to the secondary matter. "You will, I hope, have no objection to allowing your niece to join my musical party?"

"I am sorry to refuse, but I see that my niece would not like such a public exhibition of her incompetence. Besides, she has not voice enough yet.—It is just a delusion of Lord Merle's! I can, however, supply her place, if you are really anxious for a good contralto, and an unprofessional young lady.—Our vicar's daughter—my friend, is quite an

artist. Lord Merle and his brother know her, and what she can do. She would really enjoy it. I will give you a line of introduction. You can call this morning."

"But," said Lady Fortescue, "won't they think it strange?—Never to have been in their house before!"

"You never were in *my* house before to-day, you know!" said Miss Hastings, smiling. "There is always an understood motive for every first visit."

Mr. Morton began to look with uneasiness on the future Lady Carleton.

Very soon after, Margaret and Mr. William Grey reappeared, and all the visitors took leave. Margaret, who was of the old-fashioned school of young ladies, accompanied her aunt's guests to the gate, and saw the carriages drive off. On her return, she found Miss Hastings leaning back in her chair, pale and exhausted.

"These visitors have fatigued you, my dear aunt; I ought to have helped to talk with them! It was very selfish to go away as I did!"

"Not at all, my dear!—Give me your arm. I think a sight of the garden will do me good," said Miss Hastings, turning her eyes longingly

towards the blue sky. Margaret ran to fetch a shawl, and put it carefully round her aunt. They were silent till they came to the pretty jessamine arbour, which was Miss Hastings' favourite retreat.

"I must sit down here, my dear. Walking brings on the pain in my side.—There! that is very pleasant. The house looks so pretty from here, and so does the little stream. How placid, how enviably happy Bess and Strawberry are!"

"Yes, indeed!" replied Margaret. "I sometimes think I should like to be a good cow."

"That must be when you are a bad girl, and forget the dignity of humanity," said her aunt, smiling. "Tell me, dear, was I right in supposing you do not wish to sing at this party of Lady Fortescue's?"

"Quite right, aunt. I don't know the music. It is far too difficult; and besides, my voice is not at all settled."

"Would you like to go to the party as a listener?"

"No, aunt. I do not wish to go at all.—I don't like the Fortescues! Besides, I am tired of these grand aristocratic parties. Our own quiet evenings here suit me best—and these

delicious sunny mornings.—Did you say any more to Lady Fortescue on the subject?"

"Yes; I declined the invitation for you."

"Not a very flattering one, aunt! They could find no better contralto among their acquaintance, and so Lord Merle and Arundel proposed that *I* should be asked," said Margaret, flushing rosy red. Then, as if to hide a feeling of indignation, she began to laugh.

"Oh! that dear, queer Brutus! I *must* tell you two things about him that are quite traits of character." She then related the little incident of the presentation of "Waverley."

"Was it not nice of him, aunt?—But now I must tell you something he told me when we were walking in the garden."

"Stop, my dear!—There is some visitor at the gate. I hear a ring. Go and tell them to say I can see nobody."—Margaret began to run towards the gate (which was visible from the bower), in order to waylay the servant, but she was too late. Sunny Bank not being an aristocratic domain, the servants were apt to do each other's work if it came in their way. And though it was not Joseph Rosemary's "place" to open the gate to visitors, yet, as he happened to be near it

when the bell was rung, it seemed to him a matter of course that he should open it. He did so, and admitted two gentlemen, before Margaret could reach him. They were Arundel and his father.

The latter spoke to her immediately—"How do you do, my dear?" But his eyes were wandering round the place eagerly, and he said no more, until she had exchanged greetings with his son;—not a very equal exchange, be it said;—for Arundel's was affectionate and cordial, hers was constrained, and rather distant.

"Is your aunt at home, my dear?" asked Lord Carleton, measuring with his eye a fine acacia on the lawn, and comparing it with his recollection of the same tree, twenty-five years before.

"Yes; but she is so unwell, that——"

"Indeed!" interrupted Lord Carleton—"I am sorry to hear that! Is she confined to her room—or, can she see me?"

"She is not in her room, my lord; she is in that arbour, yonder."

"Ah! the old jessamine bower!" He knew it well; for with his own young hands he had made that bower and planted the jessamine on the eighteenth birthday of the woman

who now sat within its luxuriant shade, and watched him approaching. Why are her hands clasped so nervously?—why does the heart within her beat audibly, and send the blood once more like lightning through her veins? Why is this? Is she not a calm, sensible woman, in the autumn of her days? What means this stirring of the spring-time within her bosom? She is astonished at her own emotion. “I did not know I could feel *so* any more. I thought it was all gone—all dead. Cannot I see him without recalling the long-forgotten past? Surely there is something unnatural in my sensations this day! All nature impresses my spirit more vividly than usual. Thought and feeling are as acute and brilliant as if I were young again. Is it the sudden leaping up of the flame before the lamp is extinguished?”

The last question still lingered in her mind as Lord Carleton ascended the grassy mound on which stood the bower—its entrance curtained by the waving dark green leaves.—He came alone, having said to Margaret and his son,

“My dear children, I wish to speak to Miss Hastings on business.—I will go to her, and you can amuse yourselves.—It seems but the

other day that I was as young and as free from care as you!"

Lord Carleton had forgotten the cares of youth—its immense capacity for suffering; he remembered only its pleasures. Arundel looked at his father with a darkened countenance.

"They are going to talk about *me*," he thought. "He will never understand me!"—Arundel was right. His father had come to Sunny Bank to talk with Miss Hastings about plans for guiding his son in the way he wished him to go. During the last few months he had frequently consulted Miss Hastings about his son's strange conduct at Bonn. He had sent him thither after receiving private intimation from some Oxford authorities of the unorthodox opinions publicly maintained by his son. To prevent the scandal of expulsion from the bosom of that venerable *Alma Mater*, Arundel was summoned thence, and at his own request transferred to Bonn.

Instead of remaining with the Herr Professor Weisenase, the youth took to rambling all over Germany with his fellow-students, or oftener alone. He cultivated the acquaintance of mere dreamers, philosophers, artists,

and men of letters; hunted out remarkable geniuses in garrets and hovels; scattered his English gold and his youthful enthusiasm wherever he went, leaving the perfume of a good name behind him—a name for purity of heart and conduct—for uncommon genius—for a certain something that made the heart beat warmly, and the tongue become eloquent, whenever the *junge Engländer* was mentioned. He knew not the effect he produced on the great celebrities, world-worried and world-weary, whom he came to worship—and if they would let him—to love. The most inaccessible, the most morose, softened before the gentle fire, the pure loving breath of that young genius.

The rugged, melancholy Beethoven was won to smiles at their first interview—and wept at their last. “If he had not been an English lord, he might have been a great composer,” was said of our Arundel by that grandest musical genius of our century.—Goethe seemed to be moved by his presence as by an embodiment of his own idea of youth—or what youth will be in some far-advanced stage of humanity.—Schiller, alas! was dead when Arundel visited Weimar.—With Jean Paul, *der Ein-*

siger, the beautiful and impassioned young man, who drew with such inimitable humour *the reverse* of the medal in honour of the English nation, which he struck on the occasion of their first meeting,—with him, he was at once an idol, and a younger, perhaps less gifted, but better trained brother.—With Fichte, the large-hearted philosopher and politician, the son of the sea-girt isle of Liberty—aristocratic by birth as he was—was a favourite; and what was more,—a companion, to whom he discoursed on the deepest mysteries of divine philosophy, and found himself *understood*; and from that fresh and original mind, nurtured as it had been in a sphere so different from that in which his own youth had expanded, the builder of noble and beautiful hopes for man's future career on earth received new impulse and invigorated faith in his own theories.

All the great men were tolerant of his errors; even Goethe loved to hear the youth expatiate on the democratic principle, while his eye and ear were thoroughly satisfied with the effect of the aristocratic principle as exemplified in the case of the noble speaker. Thus, instead of “poring over melancholy

books" in a university, Arundel Raby was living face to face with some of the greatest men of the day. His father was, at first, uneasy on this account; but upon reflection, and after a conversation with Miss Hastings, he came to the conclusion that his son's nature was exceptional, and required exceptional means of development.

"He is trying his powers; discovering the work which he is best able to perform.—Let him alone. Attempt to interfere with the natural working of his mind, and I cannot answer for the result," said Miss Hastings.

"But what will be the result if we do *not* interfere?" asked his father. "He will be utterly unfit to occupy his true place in society.—An English landed proprietor must not be a cosmopolite and a *dilettante*."

"Do not fear!—Arundel is very young. Would you rather that his departures from the *juste milieu* which maturity clings to, that his irregularities should be what they are, than like those of other young men?"

Lord Carleton looked grave.—His son Merle, the pride of his heart, was certainly more moral than the generality of young men of his rank; but his extravagance occasion-

ally displeased his father.—But he had more sympathy with the errors of this son, because they were looked upon as venial by the world, than he had with the errors of the other—errors, which the world could never tolerate, because they were directed against its dearest, deepest vices.

“Tell me,” urged the steady advocate, “would you rather see Arundel what he is, than one of the ordinary sowers of wild oats, whom society smiles on?—forgetting that as they sow so shall they reap, though the harvest be far off.”

“I know not,” replied the father, “which is the worst—the dissipation of the intellect or of the senses.—In Arundel’s case, I fear the former is the worst. I have grave doubts whether he will ever become more than a half-inspired fool. You, yourself, who have studied his mental and physical constitution more than I have had time to do,—you say that through life he will be liable to attacks of—of—*insanity*.—I need not cheat myself with softened words!—He knows it, and that knowledge is almost sufficient to unhinge the mind!”

“It has not done so in other cases,—in *your*

own," said Miss Hastings, gravely. "Believe me, it will not do so in Arundel's. I warn you!—Do not let him suspect you doubt his sanity; above all, do not act on such a doubt, and lay restrictions on his free agency!"

At length Lord Carleton had letters from François de Merville, his son's companion, which caused him to seek Miss Hastings again.

"He is studying night and day theology and metaphysics—he is restless—sleepless—regardless of all external things!—François cannot persuade him to leave his study or to see any one."

"I, too, have had a letter from M. de Merville," she replied.—"You must exercise your parental authority, and recall him immediately. He may fall ill, in a strange land. Write to him kindly—say that you want him here. When he is here—give him some active work to do, either on your estates or those that will be his."

"I should be glad of his help in public matters—perhaps *that* would carry him soonest out of his sombre speculations. However, he shall return."

He did return; and was present, as the reader knows, at the fine entertainment already

mentioned. The journey, the change, the thousand occupations which his father contrived for him, completely dissipated the dark theological mists which were beginning to bewilder his artistic spirit.

He and his father conversed frequently upon the greatest questions—political and social. Lord Carleton had encouraged him to *speak out*, by every means except the most effectual—sympathy, which he could not make use of, and the next most effectual—strong opposition—which he dared not make use of, lest his son's brain should not be able to bear it.

Troubled at heart and sorely perplexed, he now came again to consult with his old friend, Miss Hastings; and, as he pulled the bell, the object of his solicitude approached the gate from another direction.

They entered the garden together, and parted, as has been described.

END OF VOL. II.



